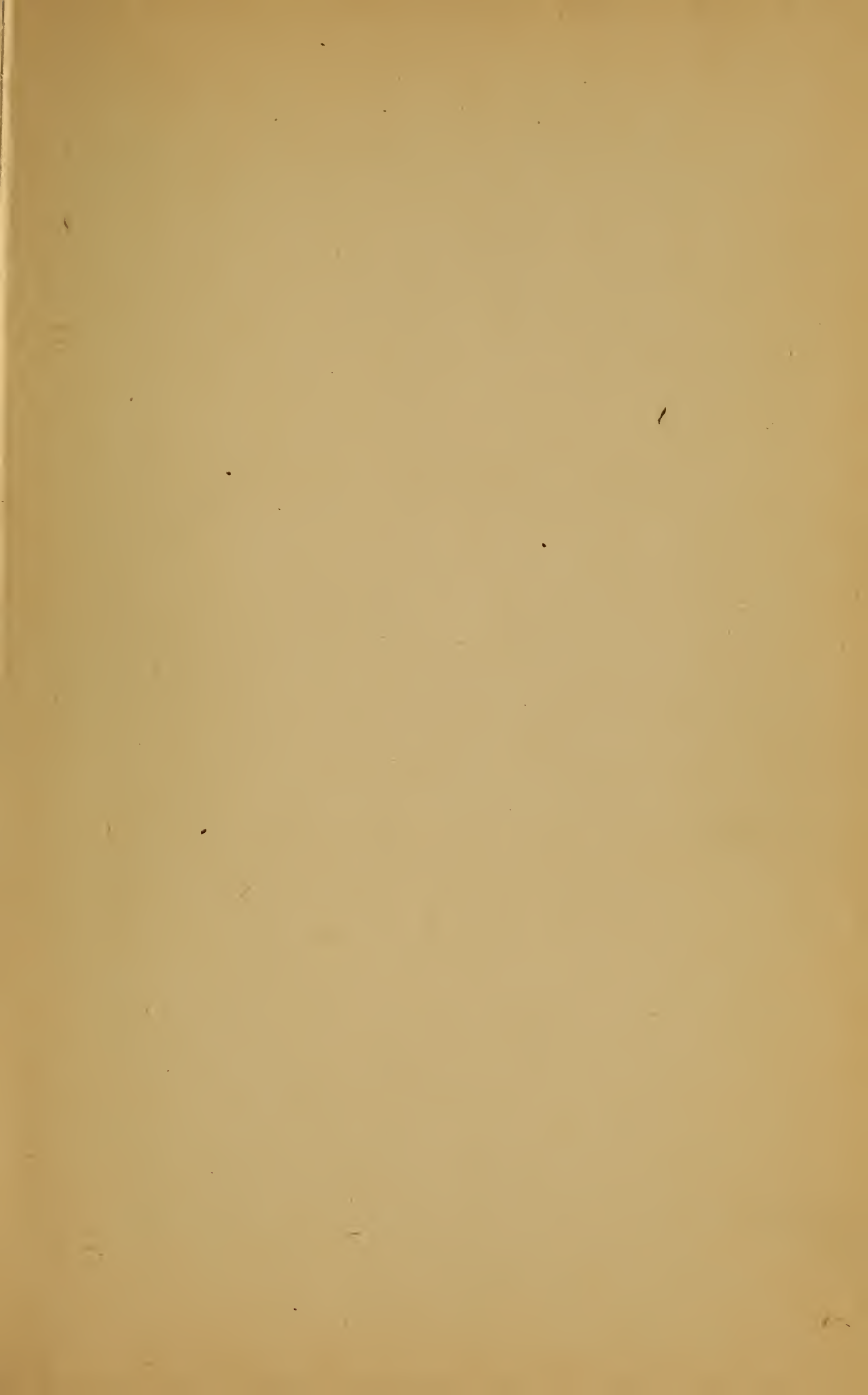


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SHORT INSTRUCTIONS

FOR

EVERY SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

AND FOR

THE PRINCIPAL FEASTS.

From the French by

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✠ MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,

Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, February 5, 1897.

INTRODUCTION.

I THINK it is true to say that at no time in the history of the Church, from the days of our blessed Saviour to this very hour, has the word of God been more industriously proclaimed than at the present. And this is particularly true of our own country.

The time was, and in our own recollection, when the faithful assembled and assisted at the holy sacrifice, and immediately departed. They were fully satisfied that the law of the Church had been complied with. They rarely, if ever, heard the gospel or the epistle read in the vernacular. The time was too limited, or the priest was burdened with other and pressing duties which would not allow of delay. Both priest and people were obliged to content themselves with a scant fulfilment of the Sunday precept.

But this condition has ceased. The priests are now more numerous, and the arrangements for Sunday services have been perfected. There is now scarcely an assembly of the faithful where the word of God is not spoken. Our holy father, Leo XIII., ever watchful for the spiritual welfare of his flock, has directed that even at the Low Masses on Sunday,

some instruction should be invariably given to the faithful. No arguments are needed to convince us of the wisdom which prompted this command.

This thought it was which suggested the translation of these "Short Instructions," in the hope that they might prove helpful to the busy priest, and even useful to the pious laity; and thereby supplement the work of religious instruction which is now so zealously carried on by the priests, and so much appreciated by the people.

After reading these "Instructions" in the original, I did not hesitate to give them an English garb, as I found them well calculated both to instruct and to edify. The choice of subjects, the manner in which they are treated, the practical details, the correct and sometimes even elegant style, the sound doctrine,—in a word, to my mind, they possessed everything necessary to impart a knowledge of true devotion, and the means to advance in the way of perfection.

Therefore, in the hope that they may prove to others as useful as they have been to me, I respectfully submit these instructions to the kind consideration of priests and people.

T. F. W.

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SHORT INSTRUCTIONS.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE TWO ADVENTS.

First Point.—At the beginning of the holy season of Advent, we are naturally led to consider . . . the two comings of our blessed Saviour. The first, when He comes to save men; and the second, when He shall come to judge them. These two comings are attended by very different circumstances. In the first, it is a hidden God, who seems to fear manifesting Himself, and He veils His majesty under the charms of infancy. In the second, it shall be a terrible God, who will appear in splendor. His voice will resound as thunder, and will cause the powers of heaven to tremble. In the first coming the prophets represent Him to us as a gracious King, who comes in all kindness; but in the other coming, they show Him to us with thunderbolts in His hands and indignation in His face. At the first coming, the shepherds and wise men kiss His feet and contemplate Him with love, while the angels invite men to rejoice. “Behold, I announce to you tidings of great joy.” Angels

also will come to announce Him at the end of time, but they will announce Him by a terrifying trumpet-sound, which shall awaken the dead in their tombs. At Bethlehem, everything calls for love and confidence, but at the end of the world everything will inspire fear and terror. At His first coming, the poor swaddling-clothes shall be the sign by which He will be recognized, but at His second coming, the sun eclipsed and the moon stained by blood shall be the signs of His advent. The first coming takes place in the silence of the night; the other, amid thunder and lightning. At Bethlehem, He is in a manger, in the stable; but then, He will be on a throne and will come in a brilliant cloud. What relations can these two comings have, so widely different in their circumstances and in their objects, that the Church, which does nothing except in profound wisdom, begins the holy season, when she prepares her children for the coming of Christ the Saviour, by the spectacle of Jesus as our Judge? She wishes that the remembrance of the one should serve as a preparation for the other. By fear of the judgments which Jesus shall render as sovereign Judge of the universe, she wishes to determine our rebellious hearts to profit by the mysteries of love which Jesus our Liberator will teach us. Fear smooths the way to love, and we shall understand better the benefit of redemption in all its extent when we shall be vividly impressed by the rigor of those judgments from which this benefit will preserve us. Let us,

therefore, enter into the spirit of the Church, our mother, and by contemplating Jesus in the clouds which will serve as a tribunal, we shall dispose ourselves to adore Him in the manger which serves Him as a cradle.

Second Point.—Let us consider the signs which shall announce the second coming of the Son of God, and the principal circumstances which will accompany His coming. The sun will refuse its light to terrified men; the moon will appear as if stained by blood; the sea in frightful convulsions, threatening to overflow its barriers; densest darkness will cover the earth as with a thick veil of mourning; angels will come to announce that the end of time has arrived—the human race awaiting, in consternation, in frightful anxiety, the end which these sad signs foretell.

However, the destruction of the universe is not the most appalling in the last scenes which will terminate all the scenes of the world. For what is it, after all, that the world should be effaced, when we know that it must perish? But on the ruins of the world, the Son of man, announced by so many prodigies, preceded by justice, surrounded by majesty, comes from heaven in all the pomp of His power, in the midst of the acclamations of the heavenly court, who attend Him! What a contrast between glory and destruction, between life and death! Behold the picture which the Prophet Daniel has made of it: “I beheld attentively, until the thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days was seated.

His throne was like flames of fire and its wheels of burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him. A million of angels ministered to Him and a thousand million stood before Him. The Judge is seated and the books were opened. I beheld one like the Son of man advance towards the Ancient of days; and they presented them before Him. And they gave Him honor, power, and kingdom, and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him. His power is an everlasting power which shall not be taken away from Him, and His Kingdom shall not be destroyed. My spirit trembled. I, Daniel, was affrighted at these things." And who shall not be terrified? O my God, behold me at Thy feet, seized with terror at the remembrance of Thy judgments! Have pity on me before the day of Thy vengeance arrives, for on that day there shall be no longer pity or pardon.

Third Point.—Let us consider the rigor with which Jesus shall deal towards impenitent sinners on the day of His justice. He will command His angels to separate the wicked from the elect, as if they were unclean animals. He will place before their eyes the iniquities which have stained their miserable lives; and when He shall have confounded them before the eyes of the whole world, He will turn on them the eyes of His majesty. But who could endure the weight of His avenging looks? How true it is to say that sinners shall implore the mountains to crush them and death to annihilate them! But no, this will not happen;

they must endure the agony of His terrible gaze, they must live to render by their sufferings eternal homage to that justice which they have so shamefully outraged.

To understand to what extent sinners are hideous in the eyes of God, it will suffice to meditate on the first word He will address them. It is a word of indignation and disgust: "Depart from Me," and His voice, like to thunder-sound, shall resound to the extremities of the earth. At this anathema hell rejoices at the victims which are given and the demons rush forth to receive their prey. A saint thought he heard a voice issue from the throne of God to plead the cause of the sinner, and the following dialogue ensued: "Lord, dost Thou not recognize the work of Thy hands, and Thy privileged creature? O my God, suspend Thy sentence and Thy vengeance. These whom Thou rejectest are the very ones for whom Thou didst die; they are Thy children, the heirs to Thy Kingdom." But He answers: "I do not know them! They have blasphemed My name, they have despised My love, they are ingrates. They have employed My very gifts against Me, and now I have cursed them. Depart from Me forever." "But, O my God, behold their tears, hear their lamentations. They form a large part of Thy children! Do not allow them to perish forever." But He answers: "Have they not outraged Me? Indeed they weep, but it is with rage, not in love. How often have I spoken to their hearts, how often have I tried to lead them

back to Me, and they have closed their ears to My voice. Now I curse them, let them go far from My presence. Depart, ye cursed!"

O my God, I am not astonished, if the remembrance of Thy judgments has converted so many sinners, peopled the deserts with holy anchorites, and wrung tears from so many holy penitents. Is it possible to weep too bitterly for the faults which must be expiated in hell, unless they are expiated here on earth? My God, what shall be my misfortune, if, after having reflected on the terrors and the regrets which will follow Thy second coming, I shall not profit by the means of salvation which the first coming affords me! Do not permit it, O my God, and grant that I may never abuse Thy love and Thy mercy.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

JESUS AN OBJECT OF SCANDAL.

THE disciples of St. John came to ask of Jesus if He were the Messiah so long promised to the . . . world. He answered them by working miracles, and added: "Blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in Me." What a sorrow it is to think that the amiable Son of God could be an object of scandal for any one! We will now consider how frequent is this scandal and how criminal it is.

First Point.—It is indeed strange that Jesus and His religion should be an object of scandal and contradiction among men; yet such was the prediction of the holy old man, Simeon: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." Never has a prediction been verified with more constant precision. Jesus was an object of scandal for the Pharisees by the splendor of His virtues. These haughty hypocrites could not endure Him whose wisdom compelled them to blush. They wished Him to be considered as a Samaritan, a sinner, one possessed by the demon, and they put Him to death. His poverty and humiliations were a scandal to the Jewish people. These worldly people imagined the Messiah to be a conquering

king, who should reduce all other nations under His empire, and they refused to recognize the Messiah in the humble Jesus. The Gentiles were scandalized at the Cross, which they regarded as a folly. He had been an object of scandal for the pagan emperors, who persecuted Him for three hundred years, in the person of His disciples.

The bloody persecutions ceased, but the scandal still remains. Even in His Church Jesus is an object of contradiction. The incredulous are scandalized at the mysteries which their proud reason rejects, because they cannot comprehend His mysteries. The libertine is scandalized at the severity of His Christian morality, and which he pretends is above and beyond the strength of men. The heretics are scandalized at the undeniable authority of His Church, and raise against her the standard of revolt. And lax Christians, in still greater numbers, are scandalized at the abasement of His mercies; while slaves of a miserable human respect blush at His name and the duties which that name imposes.

Such ingratitude is indeed revolting; but are you wholly exempt from it? Is it true that Jesus is not for you an object of scandal? You love riches and Jesus despised them; you seek after pleasures, and Jesus condemned them; you are fond of the world, Jesus rejected the world. How, then, can you say that you love Jesus, when you love nothing which He has commanded, but, on the contrary, love precisely what He has forbidden? In thus

living, you cannot deny that Jesus is for you an object of contradiction. While you do not despise His name, His doctrine and His love are a scandal for you! Yes, Jesus is a scandal for you, O vindictive man! because He has pardoned injuries; Jesus is a scandal for you, vain young woman, because He practised humility; Jesus is a scandal for you, young man, because He has loved purity; and for you, who do not know how to obey or mortify yourselves, Jesus is also a scandal, because He has practised obedience even to the death of the Cross.

O my Jesus, inspire in my heart a true love for Thee, that henceforth nothing shall be a scandal to me, in Thy doctrine, Thy life, or Thy humiliations. I shall strive to become like Thee by loving what Thou loved and by despising that which Thou despised, and by practising the virtues of which Thou hast given an example.

Second Point.—To be scandalized at Jesus is a crime. What greater outrage can there be against God, than to be scandalized at His benefits, and to seek in His infinite goodness some reason for revolt against Him? In fact, what is it, says Bourdaloue, that scandalizes and disheartens us in the religion we profess? Precisely that in which God manifests His love for us. All those mysteries which shock our delicacy—those mysteries of a God made man, a God humiliated, a God persecuted, a God dying—are these anything else than the fulfilment of that grand word spoken to us by God Himself—"God has so loved the world"?

Pope St. Gregory signalizes and deplores this criminal conduct, when he exclaims: "Man has taken as an object of scandal against his God the very things which should inviolably attach him to his God." In fact, it is evident, if anything were capable of uniting us closely to God, inspiring us with zeal for Him, and making us ready to sacrifice everything for His honor, it is certainly the thought that God has died for us and was annihilated for us. This thought has produced marvelous fruits in the saints—prodigies of virtue, heroic conversions, renunciation of the world, and dispositions generous enough for martyrdom. And what has done all that? The sight of the God-Man, and of a God sacrificed for the salvation of men. This it is which has gained their hearts and filled them with intensest love. It is also that which has been the occasion of scandal for certain Christians and induced them to lead an idle, impure, and disorderly life. At the sight of this disorder, Tertullian indignantly exclaims: "Be scandalized, if you will, at everything, but at least spare the person of your Saviour; spare His cross, since it is the source of your life; spare it, since it is the hope of the whole world." If it were the angels who were offended at it, or were scandalized, this would be in a measure tolerable, since Jesus has not suffered for them. But since it is for you that the Saviour has come, and for you He has wished to die, the scandal should recoil on you and upon all creatures."

Learn, therefore, at the foot of your Saviour's cross, the sentiments with which the memories of His mercies should inspire you. See, in His voluntary abasement, not a motive for blushing, but a reason for loving Him. It is not necessary to be a Christian to reason in this way, but it is necessary thus to think to be a Christian. The more you enter into these sentiments, the more you will participate in the grace and spirit of Christianity; and in proportion as these sentiments shall grow less in you, so too will the spirit of Christianity decrease in you. Let the worldlings run after the world and its vanities, but as for you, strive to cling closely to the person of your lovable Redeemer. There is no salvation except through Him; love His teaching, love His example, and love His religion, and then you will not make a subject of scandal that which is the principle of your salvation and the foundation of your perfection.

O my Saviour, do not permit that I should ever be scandalized at what Thou hast done for me and the divine teachings Thou hast given me. Impress on my heart such a high esteem for Thy humiliations and sufferings, that Thy cross may be at once my strength, my guide, and my glory.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST A MODEL OF HUMILITY.

THE Jews had sent some messengers to ask of St. John the Baptist if he were the Messias, . . . or, at least, if he were Elias, or a prophet. He replied: "No! I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord." By these simple and modest words, St. John gives us an admirable lesson in humility, and his humility is made manifest by three principal traits: he refuses all kinds of honor, he speaks of himself in the most modest terms, and he eulogizes Him who is considered his rival.

First Point.—St. John refuses all honors. At once he refuses those honors to which he has no right. The object of the Jews, in addressing St. John the question, "Who art thou?" was to compel him to declare if he was, or was not, the Messias. The mere expression of such a doubt filled the precursor with confusion. He was sorrowfully surprised at the thought that any one should confound him with the Master. He therefore rejects this supposition with all the strength of an indignant soul, and boldly and emphatically declares that he is not the Messias—"And he confessed and did not deny, and confessed, I am not the Christ." But

they still urge him: "Who, then, art thou? art thou Elias? and he said to them, I am not. Art thou a prophet? He answered, No." The humility of St. John had here to undergo a severe trial. In fact the Jews were disposed, if he had wished it, to recognize him as their king, their liberator, and even as the Messias. He had but to say a single word, and the whole synagogue would have come to do him homage; but St. John is too humble to accept a title and honors which he does not merit, and hence he declares without hesitation that he is not the Christ.

His humility goes farther; he refuses even the honors to which he has a just right. Without being the Christ, St. John the Baptist was great enough to be extolled and praised; without any usurpation he could claim at least the titles which Jesus had given him on several occasions. If he were not really Elias, he was a figure of him. He represented him, and he exercised, in the first coming of the Son of God, the ministry which Elias shall exercise at His second coming. He leads the same life as Elias led, he manifests the same virtues, the same zeal, the same mortifications, and the same fearlessness before the powers of the earth.

True, he was not Elias in reality, but he was Elias in spirit and in virtue. With the same truth, he could accept or refuse the title of prophet. He could refuse it, since the ministry of the prophets consisted in announcing, from afar, the coming of the promised Messias. His mission was to show

that the Messiah had come to the Judeans. This, however, was not to prophesy, but only to announce what already existed. He could also accept the title of prophet; the Messiah whom he preached existed in truth, but He had not yet manifested Himself. His mission hitherto remained in the class of future things, so that he was really predicting and prophesying what he announced. So that, between the two, St. John, without hesitation, takes the part which is most favorable to his profound humility. But Jesus bestows on him, with superabundance, the glory of which he had deprived himself; He declared that not only was St. John the Baptist a prophet, but that he was more than a prophet, thus realizing what He had so often preached, *i.e.*, that "he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Second Point.—St. John speaks of himself in the most modest terms. The Jews, dissatisfied by the response which St. John had given, said to him: "Who art thou, what sayest thou of thyself?" He answered: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord. I indeed baptize in water, but there is One in your midst whom you do not know, whose shoes I am not worthy to loose." The holy precursor abstained as much as possible from declaring whom he was, and confined himself strictly to the questions which were proposed to him. He was content to modestly, but positively, avow what he was not. But a precise question puts him to the necessity of

an explanation and to say exactly who he is. He speaks of himself, but it is because he is constrained to do so. It is an avowal which is forced from his modesty, and by declaring the truth he shall still more conciliate this duty with his sentiments of humility. He shall say only what is necessary to make known his mission. The interests of his Master demand it, but he shall say it in the most simple terms, and far from all pretension and praise for himself: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord." It was simply impossible for him to speak of himself in a more modest manner. A voice is only a mere sound, entirely without substance. St. John, therefore, declares that he is absolutely nothing by himself.

For a moment put yourself in the place of St. John the Baptist. Think that some one comes with authority to demand who you are, what have you to say of yourself? Candidly, what response should you make? Would you, as the holy precursor, be principally occupied in preventing an opinion, too advantageous, which might be formed of you? Would you acknowledge with the same frankness what was wanting in you? And, if obliged to speak of what was advantageous to you, would you do so as simply and as modestly as St. John did?

Third Point.—While St. John speaks of himself and of all that concerns him with so much modesty and reserve, he enlarges with pleasure on the grandeur of Jesus, and finds also in praising Him the

means of humbling himself. This is the conduct of one who possesses a truly humble heart. As much as he tries to conceal in secret the gifts which he has received from God, just so much does he love to publish the gifts with which others are adorned. His modesty suffers from the eulogies he receives, while his charity rejoices at those which he gives. Are these your sentiments? Do you love to bestow praise rather than to receive it? Are you eager to extol the good qualities of your neighbor, and to be forgetful of his defects? How rare are dispositions like these, and yet how suitable they are in a Christian soul?

O my God, how far I am from having the sentiments of humility which Thy holy precursor had! I am as proud as he was humble. Do not permit, Lord, that I should ever forget the nothingness from which Thou hast drawn me; and if I am obliged to extol the good which I possess, let it be only to make known the greatness of Thy power and the magnificence of Thy gifts.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE DISPOSITIONS FOR THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS.

WHEN a king wishes to go through his kingdom and visit his people, an armed herald precedes him and announces his arrival. Everything which might inconvenience his passage is removed; triumphal arches are erected in his honor, and flowers are strewn on the way which he shall pass. Well, the King Jesus is coming to visit us; already His herald has preceded Him, inviting you to do Him honor. St. John the Baptist asks of you, in the name of his Master, not indeed to cast flowers on His way or to erect triumphal arches, but he does require that you should fill the void which is in your heart and adorn it with virtues. "Every valley shall be filled." He indicates the virtues you must acquire; but there are two especially, viz., humility, which shall bring down your pride, and a spirit of faith, which shall smooth your pathway. "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked ways shall be made straight."

First Point.—The first disposition which the precursor demands in the name of his Master is humility. "Every mountain and every hill shall be brought low." These two expressions seem to indicate two kinds of pride. The larger kind in-

creases beyond measure, and seems to lift us up as a high mountain, the weight of which crushes everything else that is near it. This is the first pride of which we must divest ourselves. There is another, more delicate and hidden, represented by the hills, and seems rather to be self-complacency, that raises us above others. This pride, although less criminal, no less hinders the coming of the Saviour. If Jesus shall approach you, you must begin by humbling yourself in your own estimation.

Pride, in all its shades, is the sworn enemy of the Saviour; it has occasioned the loss of the first man, and it is still the cause of all the disorders which disturb the world. Pride of independence is the source of revolts against superiors; pride of ambition is the source of the catastrophes which desolate society; pride of reason is the principle of incredulity which refuses the yoke of faith; pride of science is the cause of schisms which rend the bosom of the Church; pride of human respect makes us blush for our faith and abandon our Christian duties; pride of vanity begets love of the world, taste for dress, luxury, the ruin of families, and the loss of innocence. This must be sufficient to tell you the horror which pride inspires in Him who has come to destroy sin, which is, after all, the pride of our first father.

Pride explains the humiliations of the crib, the thirty years of Jesus' life in the house of a poor artisan, the severity of a moral all abnegation and humility, the opprobrium and the humiliations of

the cross; to oppose it not only are lessons and precepts necessary, but the force of example is required to remove every excuse and to confound forever all human vanity. Jesus might have been born in the palace of a king and in the midst of opulence. "If He had wished it," says Bossuet, "what golden coronet could have encircled His head, and what royal purple could cover His shoulders!" But He has not wished it. He has selected the other extremity, just precisely to teach us, by His example, loving humility. May you comprehend these great and exalted lessons, and, in the school of the divine Master, may you learn the practice of humility.

Second Point.—The crooked ways shall be made straight. You find indicated here, under these symbolic expressions, one of those virtues which the world hardly suspects, but which the eye of God contemplates with pleasure; it is purity of intention or a spirit of faith. The man and the Christian, in their reflective acts, have always a motive which determines them. Man acts through self-love, through self-complacency, goodness of heart, or natural inclination; and these acts are wholly natural, without merit before God, because God rewards only what is done for Him. The Christian, on the contrary, finds in his faith the motives of his conduct. He acts for God. Having Him for the object, he wishes to please or glorify Him, and hence his acts are supernatural in virtue of this principle, that an action always participates in the

nature of the motive which determines it; and his acts are meritorious before God, since they are performed for Him.

When God depicts the just man, He defines him "a man who lives by faith." Jesus, the Just One by excellence, declares, that "His life is to do the will of His Father." This is also the life of a Christian who knows how to be faithful to his vocation; it is his glory, it is his true greatness. In fact, true exaltation presupposes continual abnegation, and to impose silence on the passions; to put aside all interest or self-love, all inclinations and affections, and to seek in the very bosom of God the reason of our acts, of our judgments, and our affections. If this is not true greatness, then where shall it be found?

And precisely because this spirit of faith supposes higher exaltation, it is most rare among men. Not to speak of so many good, though worldly, men who multiply their good works through purely natural motives, how many are there, otherwise pious and regular, who are wanting in their conduct and even in their piety this right intention which seeks only God and His good pleasure? They are kind and good, but rather by their natural goodness of heart than by their charity; they are generous to certain persons, and yet without pity for others. They pray, it is true, but only to find consolation; they abridge or prolong their conversation with God, as they experience in it fervor or dryness; they are interested friends, to whom Jesus

could well say, as to the multitude which followed Him: "It is not for My sake that you follow Me, but in the hope that I shall again multiply the bread for you." It is true they confess and communicate, but it is through habit, or to do as others do, or to please a master or a friend; in a word, they act for others, rather than for God. These are the winding and the crooked ways which the holy precursor invites us to make straight.

And so hitherto, perhaps, you have been charitable through caprice, goodness of heart, or through ostentation. Now be charitable to please God, who is charity itself, and to please Jesus, who is in the person of each one who suffers. Hitherto you have brought, perhaps, to the exercise of your zeal dispositions which are wholly human; good and anxious for some, but stormy and intolerant for others; you are ardent when successful, but discouraged when your efforts are sterile. Now seek the will of God, rather than success and the interests of self-love. Then you shall never be cast down. Hitherto you have sought in prayer, in confession, and in communion your consolations and your joys; and hence followed sadness, tears, and perhaps resistance, when your hopes were not realized. Rectify these views, which are wholly natural. Go to God with simplicity of heart, which always obeys when commanded, which submits when forbidden, and finds peace only in holy obedience; then you shall make straight the paths which shall conduct you to God.

Adorable Jesus, Thou didst come to this world only to enter my heart. Deign to enter there and take possession of it, and make it worthy to receive Thee. Enlighten me on everything which may render me displeasing in Thine eyes. Or rather, O good Jesus! create in me a new heart; fill up what is void, by adorning it with virtue; humble my pride, correct my perverse inclinations, that all the ways may be opened to Thee to come and reign in my heart and possess it forever.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

THE STABLE OF BETHLEHEM.

THE birth of Jesus in the crib of Bethlehem presents for our consideration a prodigy of humility and a prodigy of goodness.

First Point.—The crib in Bethlehem is a wonder of humility. Pride has ever been the source of the greatest misfortunes. Adam wishes to become like to God, and he is forthwith expelled from the garden of delights. The pride of Cain is aroused at the preference which God manifests for the sacrifices of Abel, and Cain becomes the murderer of his brother. The children of Noe construct a tower, which, they say, shall be a lasting monument to their greatness, and this act of pride is punished by the confusion of tongues. Even now, pride begets dissensions, hatred, and wars which desolate empires, and schisms which rend the Church. Since pride is the greatest of all the vices, it was necessary to apply a remedy to it at once, and what more efficacious remedy can there be than the humility of a God? The Divine Word offers Himself for our redemption by saying to God His Father: “Holo-causts for sin are no longer pleasing to Thee. Behold Me, Lord, Thy eternal Son, united to a mortal body; behold Me, the heir of David, poor, forsa-

ken, and reduced to the horrors of misery. For a throne, I have a manger; for a palace, I have a stable; for a royal mantle, I have swaddling-clothes, and for courtiers I have some poor shepherds." What humility! Can you ever comprehend all its greatness? Know it well, nothing would have been easier for this Child than to have been born in a superb palace, of a celebrated or renowned princess, and in the midst of a court eager to serve Him. He could do all this, since the earth, with all that it contains, belongs to Him. "All things under heaven are mine." But has not this example flattered our vices instead of extirpating them? Is it not an excuse for our pride, instead of a remedy?

Men love riches, as they are the source of honors which are often as vain and fleeting as their origin; but the Saviour, by His birth in a stable, has taught men to love poverty. Men attach much importance to an illustrious origin; but Jesus is born of a daughter of David and the world ignores Him; and this royal daughter, who is a spectacle for angels, is unable to find in Bethlehem a friendly hand that shall assist her in her poverty. Men are also proud of their studies and their science; they blush to be found in contact with people without education or instruction; but the God of the manger calls about Him simple and ignorant shepherds. Of what then shall men henceforth be proud? How can a proud man dare to look at the crib? He who possesses every perfection consents to be reckoned as nothing. He who fills all places by His

immensity is compelled to seek an asylum in a stable. He before whom all men are as small insects becomes like to them to save them. Can there be an abnegation like to this? O my humble Master! who shall not be instructed by this mystery, when he sees Thee treated as the meanest of men, rejected by every one, relegated to a poor dwelling, and surrounded by vile animals? Why dost Thou hide Thyself under a veil so unworthy of Thy greatness? Thy love answers: it is to confound the pride of men. O man, you are but the dust of the earth, still you dream only of grandeur and frivolity, while your God conceals Himself under the form of a slave. You are but a plaything of vanity, and constantly sigh for new ornaments; while your God is naked and so poor that His mother can scarcely find wherewith to cover His sacred body. If, after this wonder of humility, you still seek to exalt yourself, it would be indeed a wonder, and it would be a prodigy of pride.

Second Point.—The crib is a prodigy of goodness. Let us suppose that the only son of the greatest king of the earth, unmindful of his rank, his birth, and all the pleasures of the court of which he is the brightest ornament, should come in the midst of us and share the labors of the most unfortunate; and let us suppose that, wishing to solace them as far as he can, he should ask of his father to charge him with the obligations of all, and to fulfil these obligations he should expose himself to the rigors of the seasons and the fury of a thousand enemies,

would he not be a monster, worthy of our anathemas, who should not love such a generous prince? And who is this Son of the great King? He is the Word of God, eternal, equal to His Father in everything, a Father who is truly worthy of the name, and who places in His Son all His delights. The human race, lost by its own crimes, was about to perish. The hand of the Most High was prepared to hurl His thunders against men, but His Son, this merciful Son, restrained Him, and His anger is changed to tenderness. But a sacrifice is necessary. Well, He shall be the Victim. The crib in Bethlehem is the altar on which He is offered. O infant God, how dear Thou art to me! The tears Thou didst shed are for me; the sorrows Thy delicate members experience have been occasioned by me, and still Thy charity makes all these sufferings light and tolerable.

To understand this prodigy of goodness well, we should meditate on the sorrowful circumstances which accompany the entrance of Jesus into the world. He is born in the middle of a winter night,—the cold seizes His weak body,—His mother looks about for garments to cover Him, and finds only some poor clothes which scarcely serve their purpose. He is born to be the Saviour of men, and men despise Him and reject Him from their society as the last of all men. Hardly is He born than He at once begins to exercise the functions of a Saviour; His tears are falling in the manger. Do not suppose that the tears of the Infant Jesus come

only from a natural cause, as the tears of other children. No; His soul, reasonable at all times, sees all the crimes of men. He weeps for men, and His tears are the tears of penance. And you are the cause of these tears, you unthinking Christians, who, by refusing to receive Him in the sacrament of His love, close the door of your heart against Him, as on the day of His birth the rich closed the doors of their houses against Him. You are the object of those tears, worldly young men, who are plunged in pleasures while He endures for you the greatest sufferings. You, slaves of vanity, you are the objects of those tears, you who seek the esteem and praise of men while He is born in misery and lives in opprobrium for love of you.

O my divine and amiable Master, it is indeed a great prodigy that Thou shouldst come to me and testify so much love for me; but it is a prodigy greater still that I should acknowledge Thy love so little. After all that Thou hast suffered for me, should I find it too hard to suffer something for Thee? Good Jesus, unveil to my heart the mystery of the crib at Bethlehem, make me understand well its divine teachings, that, through love for Thee, I may know how to suffer and be humble, since Thou hast suffered and wast humiliated through love for me.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

PROPHECY OF SIMEON CONCERNING JESUS AND MARY.

THE holy old man Simeon, having blessed Jesus, said to Mary: "This Child is set for the fall . . . and the resurrection of many in Israel, and a sword of sorrow shall pierce thy heart." Simeon made these two prophecies, one concerning Jesus and the other concerning Mary. We should reflect on both, since they are calculated to suggest useful reflections.

First Point.—The prophecy which relates to Jesus. When Simeon declared that Jesus should be the ruin of many, we must not understand that He shall be the author of their ruin, or that He shall lead men to it. This would be simply impious. The Sacred Scriptures, which this divine Child has inspired, are full of His love for all men, His desire to see them merit it, and to obtain their salvation. Simeon wishes to announce that Jesus shall become, not the cause, but the occasion of loss to very many. Jesus shall be what Isaias announced He should be, and what St. Paul declares He has been, viz., "The stone on which they shall fall, and on which many of the children of Israel shall be injured." You shall find those who shall accuse

Him because of their fall on that stone, on which their feet have stumbled. Far from Jesus being the cause of our loss, the cause is traceable to ourselves, because we refuse to hear Him, or to obey Him, or to follow Him. It is in a very different sense that holy Simeon said to Mary that Jesus shall be the resurrection of many. In fact, He is not only the occasion of our salvation, as He is of our loss, but He is the true cause of it; He is the general cause of salvation for all men by the benefit of redemption; and He is the particular cause of salvation for the just, because it is He who, by His grace, has wrought their justification. By His passion and death He has opened for us the gates of heaven; He has shown us the way to heaven by His law; by His example He guides us there, and by His strength sustains us in the journey of life. Our salvation, therefore, comes from Him, while our loss comes from ourselves. If you have been stained by sin, you can blame only yourselves for your faults, while, if you have persevered in justice, you must be grateful to Him for your innocence. And thus, among the children of Israel, Jesus has been the resurrection of one part and the ruin of the other: some He has saved, but others are lost through their own fault.

What He has been for the age in which He lived and for the nation which possessed Him, He has not ceased to be for all ages and for the whole human race. He has been the resurrection of those who hear His voice, who believe His word, who

conform to His law, and who are attached to Him; but He is the ruin of those who disdain to hear Him who refuse to believe Him, who resist His instructions and who disobey His precepts.

The manner in which this oracle of Simeon is accomplished must suggest to us a very sorrowful reflection. When we consider the number of the Jews for whom Jesus was the ruin, and the number for whom He was the resurrection, what a vast disparity there exists! On the one hand we behold a handful of disciples, on the other a multitude of enemies. While almost all the citizens loudly demanded that He should be crucified, what a small number of faithful followers retired apart with Him, trembling for themselves and weeping for the Saviour! The number was small that preserved for Him a personal attachment. Now what was true in His time has been always true; it is true to-day. The unfortunate disproportion among those for whom Jesus is the resurrection, and those for whom He is the ruin, has continued from generation to generation, even until now. This has been an object of profound sorrow for the pious souls who are members of Christ's Church, and woe to us if we are insensible to it! This culpable indifference should make us tremble, lest we should be numbered among those unfortunates who could make Jesus the cause of their salvation, but instead make Him the occasion of their reprobation.

Second Point.—Holy Simeon announced to Mary that a sword of sorrow should pierce her heart.

This prophecy of the holy old Simeon has been fulfilled in Mary, and with a cruel precision. It is the destiny of mortals that no one can exempt himself from the law which condemns all to suffer. Even she who by special privilege was exempted from the stain of Adam has been obliged to submit to this severe condition of suffering. Although she had been declared blessed, and that she should see, in the future, all generations publish her honor, still her heart was a prey to the most bitter affliction. Her august character of Mother of God, which proclaimed her the happiest of women, however, rendered her the most afflicted of mothers. For other mothers it is a matter of supremest joy to possess a son, but for Mary it was a subject of constant distress and sadness, because she knew for what frightful destinies she had given birth to her Son. St. John, in the Apocalypse, records that he saw Jesus under the figure of a lamb immolated. The sorrowful Mother of Jesus had this lamentable spectacle before her eyes during her whole life. The sweetness of those caresses which she lavished on her Son, the tenderness of her cares with which she surrounded Him, were constantly poisoned by this horrible image. The very circumstances best calculated to excite her joy recalled the sorrows which awaited her. When she rejoiced to have found Him in the Temple, after an absence of three days, the thought that she should one day lose Him in a more sorrowful manner came quickly to her mind. If she rejoiced at having snatched

Him from the fury of Herod, at once she thought that it was only for a death still more cruel she had preserved Him. She rejoiced, it is true, to see Him walking through the cities and villages, working miracles, strewing blessings at every footstep, surrounded by multitudes full of enthusiasm and gratitude; but she saw that same multitude turn against Him with fury, demand His death with loud cries, hasten His punishment, and to insult and raillery add their cruelty. Thus, from the day when the fatal destiny of her Son was revealed to her, the life of Mary was only one long and continual agony.

If the heart of Mary was so violently disturbed by the sufferings of her Son, and when she could only foresee them, what must have been her cruel agony when she saw His sufferings realized before her eyes? The desolate Agar, wandering in the desert of Bersabee, was crushed by affliction at seeing the state to which her son Ismael had been reduced. This is the ordinary effect of sorrow, it is the natural promptings of a mother's love; but with the Mother of God everything is supernatural. A love like hers demands the greatest sacrifice. She never left this Son, so dear to her, and she shall not abandon Him until His last sigh on the cross. The Virgin of Nazareth walks to the mountain on which her Son is to be immolated. She walks, followed by some other daughters of Sion, weeping with her for their well-beloved Jesus, and while He shall there consummate the holocaust of

His life they shall consummate holocausts of their hearts. There nothing is lost for her which can bring her the deepest affliction; she hears all, sees all—all the cruelties of the executioners and the torments of her Son she feels in her own heart. Moreover, although the fury of the Jews had spared her life, the Fathers of the Church do not hesitate to attribute to Mary the glory of martyrdom; and this martyrdom, although not stained by blood, is not the less heroic. The other martyrs suffered with Jesus reigning in heaven; Mary suffered with Jesus while He suffered on the cross; the prospect of His glory sustained their constancy, but the sight of His humiliations disconcerted the Mother. The love of God was for them a solace, but for Mary it was an increase of sorrow.

O Mary, my Mother, engrave deeply in my heart the memory of thy sorrows, that I may better comprehend how much thou hast paid for the sad privilege of having me for thy child. And Thou, amiable Jesus, give me the grace to follow Thee as my Guide, to imitate Thee as my Model, and to obey Thee as my King, that Thou mayst be for me, not the occasion of my ruin, but the cause of my resurrection and salvation. Amen.

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

OF all the names which have been given to the children of men, the most august and the most . . . lovable is the name of Jesus. It contains in itself all that the prophets announced as greatest, all that the patriarchs have dreamed of as most gracious; it recalls at once what is most amiable in virtue, what is most tender in love, and what is most august in religion. Besides, it is an angel that has brought this name from heaven to earth; and St. Bernard says that the name of Jesus is at the same time a light, a nourishment, and a remedy.

First Point.—The name of Jesus is a light. It enlightens the mind of the priest when preaching to the people. It is by the name of Jesus that the universe has been converted; at this divine name the darkness of idolatry gave place to the light of the Gospel. St. Peter, at his first preaching, converted three thousand persons by the power of Jesus' name. St. Paul, on his way to Damascus, experienced its happy effects; he was struck, as if by a thunderbolt, while he was hastening to put the Christians to death. He heard a voice which said to him: "Why do you persecute Me?" "And who are you?" he answered. The voice replied: "I am

Jesus." At the sound of this name an unknown light shone before his eyes, and he understood the meaning of it all. "Lord," says the persecutor, now become a vessel of election, "what wilt Thou have me to do? Speak, for I am ready."

St. Paul, convinced by his own experience of the power of this holy name, made it his support in his apostolic journeys, and without other arms than this divine name he converted the world. Rome, Athens, and Corinth experienced, each in turn, the power of his word. He confounded the learned, astonished the Areopagus, and caused the proconsul to tremble in his tribunal; but it was not by his credit nor by his eloquence that he triumphed; he admitted that he was not skilful in the art of speaking well, but he knew Jesus crucified, and it was to this sacred name he owed all his success.

The effects of the name of Jesus are still the same. What light it sheds on the soul! Is it necessary to detach the hearts of the rich from their earthly goods? Reason fails against cupidity, but let the name of Jesus be pronounced and it shall recall Him who became poor through love, and soon love shall lead to a contempt for riches. Is it necessary to instil resignation in the heart of the poor man? The name of Jesus shall remind him of the poor Infant in the manger, and will make his poverty precious. Do you strive to stifle vengeance in the depth of some outraged heart by reasoning? Then all your efforts shall be in vain; but let the name of Jesus be mentioned, and the vindictive one shall remem-

ber the amiable Victim, who, although outraged and insulted, not only pardoned His executioners but excused them. His heart is open to mercy. St. John Gualbert had resolved to avenge his brother, who had been cruelly assassinated. It was on Good Friday he met the murderer, and, taking his sword in hand, he prepared to strike him, when the murderer fell at his feet and asked his life in the name of Jesus crucified. At once John felt the sword fall from his grasp; he lifted his enemy from the ground, embraced him, and pardoned him. In all your doubts, in all your temptations, pronounce the Holy Name of Jesus with faith, and the most precious lights shall dissipate your doubts, and shall show you the way you should walk to find your Saviour and your God.

Second Point.—The name of Jesus is a nourishment. There is in this blessed name some hidden virtue which goes to the very soul, penetrates it and warms it, and like some mysterious substance spreads throughout our whole being a certain strength and joy. Who has not experienced this wonderful effect? In the maladies of the soul, when temptations increase to violence, when the sources of holy consolations seem closed, when we feel ourselves growing weak, the heart without strength and the will without energy: everything in the service of God and in the practice of duty is tasteless, insipid, loathsome; then let us come to the foot of the altar, or before a crucifix, and meditate on the name of Jesus. At once confidence

shall be born in us again, and our forces shall revive. What is the source of this fervor which is experienced at the foot of a crucifix or before an altar? The lover of Jesus is occupied in repeating His name or reflecting on its sweetness. He does not know how to formulate sublime prayers; he only knows how to repeat the name of Jesus, and he repeats it a thousand times without wearying at the repetition, and this adorable name, as some burning flame, warms his heart and consoles him.

“I do not know,” said St. Bernard, “if you understand the marvellous effects of the name of Jesus, but as for me, everything, without this divine name, is insipid and wearisome. I must tell you, a book has no attractions for me if I do not find the name of Jesus in it; a conference or instruction cannot please me if Jesus is not mentioned in it. Jesus is honey to my mouth, melody to my ears, and a joyful song to my heart.”

If you look for the secret of this unspeakable sweetness which the loving heart discovers in the Holy Name of Jesus, you shall find it is born of a mysterious perfume attached to everything which comes from heaven. But should it not come also from the memories which this name awakens in the heart? See what sweet thoughts are grouped about this amiable name, as delicious fruits lie about the tree which produces them! The neglects and the adoration in the manger, the memory of virtues hidden during thirty years in the house of Joseph, the lessons and the blessings of a life which St.

Peter sums up in two words, "He went about doing good;" the opprobrium and sorrows of Calvary—all this recalls the name of Jesus. How, then, shall we not feel stirred while meditating on it?

O Holy Name of Jesus, sacred and penetrating oil, whose unction has been poured out from the beginning, and only asks to be still poured out, pour Thyself with profusion in my heart, fill it with the infinite sweetness and the charms of Thy love, that, being purified by Thee, united to Thee, and satiated by the happiness of loving Thee, I may see verified in me these words of the Holy Spirit: "Thy name is as oil poured out, and it is why Thy servants have loved Thee exceedingly."

Third Point.—The name of Jesus is a remedy. It heals every malady. First, the maladies of the body. The innumerable cures wrought by the apostles are so many consequences of the power of Jesus' name. There is nothing which can resist this divine name. Jesus Himself has proclaimed this truth. "He that shall believe in Me, shall work miracles greater than mine. In My name he shall expel demons. He shall have nothing to fear, neither the serpent's bite nor the effect of poisons. He shall impose hands on the sick and they shall be healed."

The name of Jesus heals maladies of the heart. There are in life some cruel moments, when the wearied soul implores death as the only resource. In this sadness the name of Jesus shall remind you of the sadness of the amiable Victim in the Garden

of Olives, and it shall reanimate and strengthen you. If ever you are the victim of ingratitude or of the injustice of men, the name of Jesus shall console you, and strengthen you by recalling the treason of Judas, the abandonment by the apostles, and the unworthy preference given to Barabbas. If despair threatens to invade your soul, then recall the name of Jesus; it is, says St. Ambrose, a name of hope, a name full of sweetness, a name which gives joy.

The name of Jesus heals the maladies of the soul. The great malady of the soul, that which must be especially feared, because it attacks the very sources of supernatural life, is sin. The name of Jesus is a sovereign remedy for it. And why? Because it makes us detest sin by recalling its malice; because it makes us avoid sin by giving us strength in temptations; because it makes us weep for sin, by reminding us of the love of Him whom we offend. Learn then to pronounce this blessed name with respect—it is the name of your God; with love—it is the name of your Benefactor; and with confidence—it is the name of your Saviour.

O Name of Jesus, holy and adorable name, how much I love to speak and think of it! Be also honey for my lips, and melody for my heart. In dying, may my lips still murmur this name, and may I never cease to repeat it here on earth, until the moment when with the angels I may forever bless it.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

THE FAITH OF THE WISE MEN.

[T is faith which, to-day, leads the Wise Men to the feet of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is faith . . . which can alone lead us to heaven and to God. But, to attain this happy result, our faith must be marked by the same characters which rendered it so admirable in the Wise Men, viz., docility, generosity, and constancy.

First Point.—The faith of the Wise Men has been a docile faith. See with what promptitude they correspond with grace! They say: “We have seen His star in the East, and we have come to adore Him.” There is no delay, no hesitation between the promptings of grace and their correspondence to it. This promptitude is one of the first conditions of a return to God. There are in life certain solemn and happy circumstances when grace speaks clearly to our heart. For instance, when we make a retreat, or receive good advice, or see some good example, or listen to a most touching instruction, or hear of the death of some one whom we have loved, or when we learn something which stirs us to the very depths of our heart, this is the star which must lead us to Christ! Happy is he who shall follow it with docility; his conversion is as-

sured. Under the influence of grace which speaks, urges, and solicits, we are all-powerful; there are no bonds which we cannot break, no obstacles which we cannot overcome. The Cananæan woman, Magdalene, and the prodigal son succeeded in the work of their sanctification because they were prompt to follow the inspirations of grace. But woe to him who looks backward, arrested by the countless considerations which the demon never fails to place before our eyes. The light disappears, conscience sleeps again, and the evil penetrates deeper than ever. Is not this your experience? How many times has grace enlightened your mind and moved your heart, and still you have always deferred your return. You have reason to fear that so much resistance to grace may be punished by its withdrawal.

Second Point.—The faith of the Wise Men was a generous faith. What tongue can tell the sacrifices they made? They are idolaters and strangers to the customs and languages of the countries through which they must pass; they are separated from Bethlehem by a great distance, and a respectable tradition tells us they were kings. How many difficulties arise from these different circumstances! They could allege the cares of their kingdoms, attachment to an hereditary worship, the length and difficulty of the journey, the fear of being deceived by the character of the star which served as guide—but no such thought hindered them. In fact, nothing arrests them; they leave everything, and

set out on their journey resolutely. What a comparison between your conduct and theirs, and how the comparison should cause you to blush for your conduct!

At length they appear before Herod. Even in the presence of this king, so cruelly jealous, you shall not see the Wise Men dissimulate the object of their journey or conceal their sentiments. They openly declare to him that they have come, not to adore him, but to adore Him whose star they have seen. They are at once apostles and martyrs; and this is still the conduct of Christians really worthy of the name. The world is a master just as cruel and as jealous as Herod ever was; it wishes to be worshipped, or you shall incur its disgrace; but the true Christian smiles at the menace of the world and remains faithful to his God, at the cost of the most sorrowful sacrifices. The coward heart, a slave of human respect, a slave of pride or ambition, instead of openly declaring his faith, conceals it; thus he paralyzes the action of grace, and, deceived by sterile desires, he defers his coming to God until a time that never comes. It is needless to say such conduct is not a model for imitation.

The generosity of the Wise Men was evident, especially in their obedience. God had sent them an angel to warn them. He commanded them to return to their country by another way. At once they obeyed, without thinking of inquiring the reasons for such a strange order, without murmur or complaint. They resume their journey, on the

road indicated, although it might be longer or more difficult. But what of the promise given to Herod? What shall the king say, what shall all Jerusalem think of the violation of their word? They are not at all disturbed by this thought; God has spoken: that is sufficient. They know only how to obey. Do likewise in all the circumstances of your life. When you know the will of God, strive to accomplish it, and put aside all human considerations.

Third Point.—The faith of the Wise Men is constant. Although their faith was tested severely, still it surmounted every obstacle. The first trial of their faith was the disappearance of the star which had hitherto guided them. It leaves them as soon as they had entered Jerusalem and Herod's court. Hence two thoughts naturally follow from this: the first is, that to enjoy the holy communications of grace, it is necessary to live far from certain people, far, especially, from the society of Herods and the enemies of Christ. Do you wish to find your star, that is to say, to recover your first piety, the fervor of a certain epoch in your life? Depart from the world, from the tumult of business, from dissipation and pleasures—then shall your star reappear.

The second instruction we must receive is that God does not give extraordinary lights and graces, unless the ordinary means are wanting. The star was useless to the Wise Men when they were in the midst of the doctors of the law, who could have indicated to them the way they should follow to

find Jesus. And thus the soul which is in the Church, who has for its guide the priests of the Lord, should not complain of the privation of certain interior lights. The soul has her spiritual guide whom she should consult and abandon herself to his direction. If this aid were wanting, God shall supply it by particular graces.

But the faith of the Wise Men must be tested once more. The star at length stops, but where? Doubtless over a magnificent palace, for what other dwelling could be worthy of God? But no; it stops over an abandoned hut. They enter—and find it a stable! And what do they find there? On a little straw a child is lying, scarcely protected from the cold by the clothes which cover Him; near Him are only two adorers, Mary and Joseph. What a test for ordinary faith! Are they not deceived? Was the star they followed indeed the star of Jacob? Was the long journey they made well considered? But their faith is fortified by the very difficulties which should have shaken it. There is in their heart neither doubt nor hesitation. Behold them at the feet of the divine Infant, kissing with love the little hands which He presents to them, adoring with respect their God concealed under the appearance of infancy. They open their treasures and place at His feet the triple tribute of their homage—gold because He is a king, myrrh because He is a man, and frankincense because He is their God.

O Jesus, my God, concealed through love for me, no longer under the appearance of infancy, but

under the eucharistic veils, I come to offer Thee, not gold, but the homage of a heart which loves Thee. I place my offering, not at the foot of the crib, but at the foot of Thy tabernacle. What a happiness for me, O my God, if after having recognized Thee, adored Thee, and loved Thee here below, under the veil which hides Thee from my mortal eyes, I shall merit the happiness to contemplate Thee, to adore Thee, and to love Thee in the bosom of Thy eternity, where Thou manifestest Thyself to Thy elect, face to face, and without veil of any kind.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

JESUS IS FOUND IN THE TEMPLE.

WE shall, to-day, consider how we lose Jesus, how we should seek Him, and where we . . . shall find Him.

First Point.—How we lose Jesus. We lose Jesus by sin, and we lose Him through our spiritual dryness. In the first case the loss of Jesus is a punishment; in the second it is, ordinarily, a trial. We lose Jesus by sin: He departs from the soul when the demon enters it; He leaves it alone with the horrible master it has chosen. To lose Jesus, His friendship, His grace, the sweetness of His conversations, and His benedictions, and the consolations of His love—to lose this God, who is in heaven the joy of the angels and of the elect, and to find in His place the angel of darkness, the tyrant of hell, and the tormentor of the reprobate, what a loss! what a misfortune! However, behold the lot you have made for yourself by sin. You have lost Jesus, the Friend of your infancy, who lately received your first promises and your first vows; who lisped with you the first simple lessons of faith; who called you to eat with Him a delicious bread, who shed on your soul such sweetness that the

memory of it causes your tears to flow; oh, how you are to be pitied!

We lose Jesus by spiritual dryness, but usually this is a trial. Without having been unfaithful to her promises or engagements, the soul finds herself suddenly alone on the journey of life. She believes she possesses Jesus, and behold, He has abandoned her. She relies on His assistance, she hopes for His light, His counsel, His grace, but He is far from her. She has lost Him, or at least, as with the disciples at Emmaus, He has concealed His presence from her. This trial surely awaits us, for, after the sweetness of the first days, God ordinarily allows dryness of soul to follow, to know if we serve Him for Himself or for the favors we receive. In these circumstances, we should be generous and constant. To be happy in the performance of duty is a gift of God, and is never merited; but to be faithful to duty when it is an act depending on ourselves is always a sure indication of a heart solidly virtuous.

Second Point.—How should we seek Jesus? We should seek Him eagerly, with confidence and with perseverance. Behold Mary: hardly has she perceived the absence of Jesus than she goes, at once, in search of Him. She inquires for Him of all those whom she meets; she calls Him, and she shall know no rest until she finds Him. Imitate her example. When you have had the misfortune to lose Jesus by sin, recall Him at once: run and cast yourself at the feet of the priest, implore pardon, and merit it by your repentance. Why

remain at enmity with God a week or even a day? Do you not know that if you should die in that state, your eternal unhappiness would be assured? And may you not die early, and at any moment?

Seek Jesus with confidence. After the commission of sin, do not aggravate your misfortune by discouragement or mistrust. Why are you discouraged? Virtue is a rude and difficult pathway; it is not extraordinary that your progress should be slow, difficult, and marked by repeated falls; but these falls, these obstacles, are they reasons for discouragement? No! you must employ greater vigilance, develop greater energy, and seek in God the strength which you have not, and then go forward with confidence. The traveller who is discouraged by the length or the difficulties of the journey shall never arrive at his destination; he only shall reach it who resolutely continues his journey. Therefore, seek Jesus with confidence, being well assured that He shall aid you in your seeking, and that He shall receive you with a goodness wholly paternal.

Seek Jesus with perseverance. Our Lord has spoken a word which we should often reflect upon: "He who would be saved must persevere to the end." It is indeed something to begin well. It is a grand thing for us to have received an education profoundly Christian; it is a happy guarantee for salvation that our youth should be passed in the practice of love and virtue; but this is not enough. We must persevere; and this is the difficulty. Constancy seems to be a virtue unknown to the hu-

man heart. Very many begin well but end badly. Do not imitate them, but imitate Mary in her ardor and in her perseverance in seeking the divine Infant. She will not allow herself to be discouraged, but continues her search until she has found the object of her regrets and her tears. You have prayed, it is true, and you still pray, but God seems to turn away from your entreaties; do not be discouraged; continue, multiply your prayers in proportion to the difficulties you may meet with, and God will give you the consolation of His love. He shall keep strict account of your sighs which you have sent towards heaven, of the prayers which were so often a cross, and a cross without unction; the more painful the test shall have been, the greater shall be the recompense.

Third Point.—Where shall we find Jesus? It was in the temple that Mary found her Son, and it is also in the temple that we shall find Jesus when we shall have lost Him. If this loss is the punishment of your sins, there is in His house a salutary pool, on the shores of which He stands ready to heal you. He is not found in those profane assemblies where you go to stifle the remorse which disturbs your conscience. He is not found in those frivolous books which shall only accomplish the ruin of your piety. He is not found among those frivolous people whose dissipation is an excuse for your own; but He is in the temple, and there you must come to find Him. In the sacred tribunal you shall learn what you must do to approach Him,

or, rather, He Himself will come to you, and by the mouth of His minister He will speak to you. After the pardon of your faults, He will re-enter your heart, and you will experience happiness in recovering His grace.

If the loss of Jesus is a trial, it is also a joy to know that it is in the temple that you can find Him. In the temple there is an altar—on the altar there is a tabernacle, and love for us holds Jesus enclosed in it. There it is we must seek Him in communion, or at least in prayer. Listen to this voice of sweet friendship, but take no heed of vain terrors which only separate you from your divine Master. "If you have faith," says St. Augustine, "the absence of the Lord is only seeming. He is there, ever near you, concealed under eucharistic veils. Go to Him, cast yourself into His arms with a confidence wholly filial; then you shall feel that peace is born again in your heart."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED BY HIS MIRACLES.

THE Evangelist, after having recounted the change of water into wine, at the wedding . . . feast of Cana, remarks that, at the sight of this miracle, the disciples of Jesus believed in Him. It was impossible that this result should not follow, since miracles are so much the work of God that He only, or His delegate, could work them. If then the miracles recorded in the holy gospel are true, it is evident that Jesus is all that He claimed to be, viz., the Son of God. Now the certitude of the evangelical miracles is demonstrated by their character and by the character of those who relate them, and by the monuments which give testimony of them; it is impossible, therefore, to question their authenticity.

First Point.—The character of these evangelical facts demonstrates their certitude. We observe at once they are important; they were extraordinary circumstances and calculated to arrest attention. At the birth of Jesus, the angels announced Him by a magnificent canticle; a brilliant star announced Him to the people of the East; the Magi come to the palace of Herod to inquire for the newly born child. He is seen walking on the waters and com-

manding the tempest; in the middle of a repast He changes water into wine; with a few loaves He feeds many thousands of men; by a word He heals the sick and raises the dead to life. At His death, the sun is obscured, the earth trembles, the veil of the temple is rent in twain. Facts so remarkable as these must necessarily attract public attention. Moreover, these extraordinary facts must claim the liveliest attention, since their object was the abolition of the old worship and the foundation of the new one. The pagans on account of their attachment to idolatry, the Jews because of their respect for the Mosaic law, could not but take the most lively interest in these facts, which prepared destruction for their temples and synagogues.

The second character of the Gospel miracles is their publicity. They are not, as the false prodigies which some affect to compare with them, obscure or hidden facts, to which only a small number of competent witnesses testify. They are public facts, evident and easily verified. It was in all the cities of Palestine, in the public places, under the very eyes of the doctors of the law, that Jesus manifested His power. They on whom these miracles were performed are designated by name, by their dwelling, by their profession; they still reside, after their healing, in the same villages which witnessed their infirmities. The twofold fact of their malady and their healing is quickly known by their relatives and friends and fellow-citizens; their presence alone recalls to the whole country the prodigy to

which they owe their health. Thus the very character of the evangelical facts destroys every suspicion of deceit and illusion, and alone should suffice to hinder us from questioning their truthfulness.

Second Point.—The certitude of the Gospel miracles comes from the character of the witnesses who attest them. And who are the witnesses who testify? They are, in the first place, the apostles and the disciples of the Saviour, and among them there are eight who present their testimony in writing. See, then, eight contemporary authors who recount facts of which they have been, almost all, witnesses or participators. And this is not enough; but beside these eight witnesses, whose writings we have, we know that, at the same time, the other apostles and all the disciples of Jesus, to the number of eighty at least, professed and proclaimed and attested the truth of the facts recorded. This important consequence must be admitted, that of all the most celebrated and unvarying facts of antiquity there are none so well attested as the miracles of Jesus. The history of Socrates, for example, is guaranteed by only two disciples, viz., Plato and Xenophon, still no one ever doubts concerning their narration. How does it happen, then, that any one could be found to deny the Gospel miracles? What motive can the unbeliever allege to refuse the testimony of so many, who by their writings or their living words have transmitted to us the history of Jesus? Shall it be said they were deceived, or that they combined to deceive

the world? These two suppositions cannot bear for a moment serious examination.

It is impossible for the apostles to have been deceived. Whatever idea may be formed of them, of their ignorance, of their credulity, we shall never persuade ourselves that during three entire years their Master could have been able to impose on them, and concerning daily facts so numerous and so visible. Ignorance and credulity do not go so far as that. There would remain a contradiction too shocking, between the idiotic character of the apostles, which must be admitted in this hypothesis, and their character which is evident from their writings, from their labors, and from their success. Therefore, the apostles have not been deceived.

It is equally impossible that the apostles wished to deceive. This impossibility is evident when we consider at what time, in what places, and before whom the apostles published the miracles of their Master. It was at the very moment when the facts occurred; it was in the city of Jerusalem, the scene of the principal events; it was in the midst of a multitude of false witnesses, when the least deception would have sufficed to confound them. It must be admitted that the time, the place, and the persons were badly selected to propagate an imposition.

In fine, these men, who are supposed to be cheats and impostors, preached the purest morality, practised the sublimest virtues, astonished and con-

founded their persecutors by the simplicity, the ingenuity, and the noble assurance of their discourses. They converted the world by the sanctity of their lives, and at length died in the midst of torments. How could they do all this for the senseless pleasure of sustaining a falsehood? We cannot recognize in these traits of character either impostors or liars.

But the apostles are not the only ones who give testimony to the truth of the Gospel miracles; they are recognized and admitted by the very enemies of Jesus. The Jews thought they would weaken their effect on the people by attributing them to the power of the demon, and hence they accused their Author of violating the tranquillity of the Sabbath. But these accusations were so many witnesses in favor of the Gospel facts, since to blame them was an affirmation of their existence.

Third Point.—The miracles which Jesus wrought have existing monuments to give testimony for them. There is a monument, visible to every one and permanently abiding with us, which is constantly testifying to the truth of the miracles worked by our Lord and Saviour: it is the establishment of His Church in the world. It could not exist, in fact, except as a consequence and the result of miracles. Strive to form a just idea of the enterprise of the apostles. They labored to substitute an austere morality, all abnegation and penance, for a morality which was easy and convenient; they taught incomprehensible mysteries, instead of fanciful

fables; they taught that He who had been crucified on an infamous cross must be adored; they must triumph over the repugnance of passions, the pride of reason, popular prejudices, and the power of the Roman emperors; and by what means shall all this be effected? Here it is that the finger of God is most visible. Twelve poor fishermen, without credit, without eloquence, without wealth, without any human aid, undertake and execute the most extraordinary revolution which the annals of the human race have ever recorded. It is certainly most remarkable that under these unfavorable circumstances the apostles, sustained by the authority of miracles, should succeed; but that without miracles, and what is stranger still, with miracles reputed as false, they should succeed, this would be an inexplicable phenomenon, and a thousand times more incredible than all the miracles of Christianity. That the pagan world should abandon its false deities and embrace the religion of a crucified God, it must have had some reason for belief. But the apostles proclaimed nothing else except the miracles of Christ. The world has witnessed miracles, and miracles so certain that the sharpest and most discerning can discover not the slightest vestige of trickery or deceit. The establishment of the Christian religion is the most splendid proof of this, since it constantly testifies to the truth of the evangelical facts. Jesus Christ has, then, performed miracles; but God only can do this; therefore, Jesus is God.

Adorable Jesus, in the midst of blasphemies uttered by impiety, it is sweet for me to reflect on the titles Thou hast to my adorations as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Thus my faith is enlivened; and may my love also become more ardent.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

JESUS HEALS THE LEPER.

THE leper, whose healing is recounted to-day in the Gospel narrative, is the image of a soul . . . whom sin, and especially the sin of impurity, has stained. There is a striking resemblance between the consequences of leprosy and the consequences of the sin of impurity. Leprosy, as it is depicted in our sacred books, produced four effects on the unfortunate victim. First, it corrupted the blood and attacked the very sources of life; 2d, it disfigured the body, and made it an object of disgust; 3d, it condemned the leper to live far from the society of men; 4th, it made his society dangerous, because of the contagion. You shall find these different effects in sin, and especially in the sin of impurity.

First Point.—As leprosy corrupts the blood, so the sin of impurity corrupts the heart and vitiates the very life of the soul. It not only attacks the surface, but it attacks the most intimate sources of spiritual life. Under its dominion the soul quickly loses its noblest faculties; memory is weakened, intelligence enfeebled, and the noblest faculties are compelled to give way to ignoble instincts; there is no progress in science; application to study is

impossible, no grand and elevated thoughts; the mind is narrowed, and genius becomes extinct.

In the heart the effects are still more deplorable. It perverts the most happy dispositions and develops the most shameful desires; conscience is blunted and loses its first delicacy. The victim becomes indifferent to disorders the very thought of which was once revolting; a stupid carelessness succeeds to vivacity of faith and fervor and piety. The tastes, the inclinations, and the very character are changed. Sin has done in the soul what leprosy has done in the body; it has corrupted it at the foundation, it has vitiated the very sources of life.

Second Point.—As leprosy disfigures the body and makes it an object of horror and disgust, so sin disfigures our souls and makes them an object of disgust to the heart of God. You would understand this second effect of sin if you could understand the beauty of a soul in a state of grace, the splendor with which it shines, the glory which surrounds it, and the holy pleasure with which God regards it. This beauty, it is true, has nothing exterior, nothing sensible. The prophet tells us “that the glory of the daughter of Sion is within her.” None of those splendid rays fall on our mortal eyes, but the splendor is no less real. It is that which gives a charm to infancy, it is that refreshing grace which exercises over our hearts an empire as sweet as it is irresistible.

To know the price of a soul adorned by grace, we must consult the Holy Scriptures; for what is more

reliable than the testimony of uncreated wisdom? Hear, therefore, what the Holy Spirit says of a soul ornamented with grace and the esteem which He has for it: "I who am your God, I who can deceive none, nor can I be deceived, I declare to you that I only consider silver as dross when compared with a just soul." And is this enough? No; bring together all the gold that is in the bowels of the earth: God considers all that as only a little grain of sand in comparison with a just soul. There are indeed many precious stones in the depths of the sea; they are so beautiful that they serve as ornaments for vanity, and heighten by their splendor the glory of a diadem; but when God compares them with a just soul He finds the soul a thousand times more precious. It is a grand thing to rule over an extensive kingdom, to be seated on a brilliant throne, but all that is nothing when compared with a soul adorned by grace. In a word, unite all glory, all beauty, all grandeur, yet all these cannot approach the beauty, the merit, the excellence of a soul which is clothed with grace and empurpled by the blood of the Son of God made man.

Sin, as a hideous leprosy, strips the soul of its beauty and makes it an object of disgust and horror in the eyes of God. It is with tears in their eyes that the prophets deplore the unhappy state of a soul stained and disfigured by sin. Jeremias exclaims: "How has the pure gold been changed into vile metal! All the glory of the daughter of Sion has departed!" Unfortunate soul! Who shall give

to my eyes two sources of tears to weep for thy misfortune?

Third Point.—The law required that every leper should be driven from the people and separated from his fellows as an unclean being. This is also the destiny of the sinner. As long as a man is in the state of grace, he is the child of God, the heir to heaven, the co-heir with Jesus. What a dignity! He enjoys all the rights of the children of the Church, he shares in all the goods she possesses, he participates in the prayers of the saints in heaven and of the just on earth: he has a right to the merits of the august sacrifice, to all the indulgences which the Church draws from her treasury. What riches! But by sinning he loses everything—he loses his titles of child of God and citizen of heaven, he is deprived of all the merits he has acquired, and even of the right to acquire new merits. True, indeed, he is not cut off from the bosom of the Church; he is always a member of it, but he is a dead member. He receives also certain graces, but they are weak graces, which his bad dispositions render sterile. In a word, he appears living in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of God he is dead. Oh, how horrible is this state, and how much you are to be pitied if you do not understand this misfortune!

Fourth Point.—There is a fourth effect common to sin and to leprosy: it is contagion. Leprosy is a malady to be feared so much because it is contagious. The leper communicated his malady to

all who approached him, unless suitable precautions were taken. This explains the severity of the laws regarding it and the reason of its universal repulsion. Sin is also contagious, and is communicated and spread by bad words and by bad examples. A vicious friend shall lead you to vice; his corrupting discourse shall rob you of your faith, little by little; his undue confidences shall initiate you into the knowledge of evil; his insidious words shall cause you to love him, and his conduct shall justify him in your eyes.

Fear, then, the influence of a friend who is not most virtuous; break away from his society; fly from him as you would fly from the sight of a serpent; this is the advice which the Holy Spirit gives you by the mouth of the wise man. In giving you this advice, he would teach you that a vicious friend contains within him a subtle poison, which escapes from his whole conduct, insinuates itself into the faculties of the soul, and carries with it ruin and death.

O my God, preserve my soul from the leprosy of sin; do not permit that, in becoming Thy enemy, I should lose that which in Thy eyes constitutes my true beauty, and that which can alone give me rights to heaven. Oh, may I never become for others the occasion of scandal or ruin! But if I have had the misfortune to fall into sin, give me the strength to rise again, and to find in a generous confession both happiness and life, by obtaining Thy friendship again.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE TEMPEST APPEASED BY JESUS.

THE sea on which the apostles embarked is the image of the world,—the sea strewn with . . . dangers and countless shipwrecks. The ship which carries them is the figure of your soul in its journey towards eternity. The tempest which threatens to submerge them represents the temptations of every kind, which embarrass us on our way to heaven. Every one experiences these temptations, the child and the young man, the full-grown man, and the aged; the Trappist in his solitude, as well as the worldly man in the midst of his festivities. The most scrupulous and exact piety is not even a safeguard from their attacks. Did not temptations come to those who were in closest companionship with Christ? Be careful, therefore, lest you believe that your love for God, your fervor in His service, your fidelity in the fulfilment of your duties shall shield you from temptations. This would be a dangerous error. On the contrary, your piety and your innocence shall be the reason for the demon to make greater efforts to bring you under his dominion. There are hearts enough who deliver themselves up as a prey to their enemy. He is assured of these, but he is desirous

of choice souls like yours; to make a conquest of them he redoubles his seductive snares. Still you must not be discouraged by temptations, but see in them the consolation that you are not as yet under his dominion. St. Francis de Sales has said that the dogs do not bark after the people who belong to the house, but only after strangers; so the demon leaves in a sad peace those whom he knows belong to him, and wearies the others by his pursuits, and invents a thousand artifices to turn them away from the paths of virtue. Alas, he only succeeds too well! Just cast a glance about you: where are so many souls that were hitherto so fervent? What have become of them? They have become a prey to the demon, and now they languish far from God and from virtue, in a shameful slavery! Weep for them, and conjure our good Lord to keep you far from such misfortunes.

Second Point.—While the tempest raged and threatened to engulf the bark on which the apostles sailed, “Jesus slept.” This sleep of Jesus is the occasion of our great temptations and the principle of all our falling; it is the symbol of the languor which conducts a soul to those negligences which she permits, the distractions in which she allows herself to be drawn—certain affections which are wholly natural and which have over her too great sway, and especially the facility to commit light faults. True, indeed, these faults do not deprive us of the presence of Jesus, but they diminish the effect of His presence; they do not destroy His grace, but

they weaken and diminish it. Grave sins crucify Him in us, while light offences cause Him to sink into a deep sleep. This sleep of Jesus in our soul is not always a crime, but it is always a misfortune. In fact, it is during His sleep that the storms arise, that the passions are awakened, that the enemy, who never sleeps, renews with greater activity all his dangerous attacks. He is too weak to conquer us when we are divinely assisted, but he awaits the moment to combat with us when we are not assisted by this heavenly aid. If, therefore, you perceive that Jesus sleeps in you, awaken Him immediately. That is to say, if you feel your fervor weakening or your heart growing cold towards God, your courage unequal to the fulfilment of your duties, promptly renew your ardor and take heart again. A soldier should not lay aside his arms when he perceives the approach of the enemy; on the contrary, then it is he should be animated by a new courage.

However, be not presumptuous; and never forget that you can do nothing by yourself—your strength comes from God; ask Him for His grace most earnestly. Even as the apostles, have recourse to the divine Master, and cry to Him with a profound feeling of your weakness: "Lord, save me, for without your aid I shall perish." Be assured, if you are faithful to invoke God in the moment of danger, if you invoke Him with confidence, the same prodigy which was wrought for the apostles shall be wrought for you; Jesus shall again

command the tempest to be appeased, and tranquillity and calm shall be restored to your soul.

Third Point.—But when the temptation shall have passed be assured your work is not over. Either you have successfully resisted, or you have yielded. If you have been fortunate enough to have resisted, do not claim for yourself the glory of this triumph. Be careful to refer all the honor of your victory to God. Gratitude for benefits received shall gain for you new blessings and attract new graces. Moses, after his victory over the Amalekites, erected an altar on the battlefield and there offered to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Bossuet praised the great Condé, the conqueror at Rocroy, for having intoned the *Te Deum* on the field of battle, thus recognizing that he was indebted to God for his first victory. Imitate these examples, for, since you are weak, it is impossible to triumph over the enemy by your own unaided strength. It is to the protection of the Virgin Mother and the assistance which God sends you by His angels that you are indebted for victory; why then take the glory as if it had come from yourself?

If you are obliged to admit defeat, then deplore it, but be not cast down or discouraged. Here there are two dangers to be feared: indifference and discouragement. Indifference, alas! is only too frequent. One commits sin and thinks of it no more; one is the enemy of God and remains tranquil. Should you see some loved one die you cannot restrain your tears; but your soul is dead in sin.

Shall you be insensible to this spiritual death? Be on your guard against this guilty carelessness. You have offended your God? then cast yourself on your knees and ask for pardon. Your soul is stained by sin? then do not remain in sin, but hasten to wash it away in the sacred waters of penance.

Also avoid discouragement. This would be nothing less than a new outrage against God. And let us ask, What can be the motive for discouragement? You have sinned; do you think you are impeccable? Are you stronger than Samson, holier than David, or wiser than Solomon? Whence come, therefore, your discouragement and anger? God opens His heart to you; have recourse to His mercy. Instead of being saddened or unduly discouraged, let the remembrance of your faults serve as a motive of greater humility, since you are so weak; more patience, since you have so much to expiate; more charity, since you have so much need of indulgence. Oh, then shall your fault be a happy one, and even as God you shall draw good from evil.

O my God, how good Thou art! Thou experiencest more pity than anger at the sight of Thy children's faults. I wish hereafter to entertain for Thee a truly filial confidence. If I have the misfortune to offend Thee, I shall cast myself into Thy arms, feeling well assured that Thou wilt not reject Thy repentant child.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE MINGLING OF THE GOOD AND THE WICKED.

THE parable of the cockle mingled with the good grain in the field of the father of the family, . . . furnishes us an occasion of meditating on the mingling of the good and the bad in the Church of Jesus Christ. Consider how some become bad, why God allows the association of the good and the wicked, what duties devolve on you, and how this mixture of good and bad shall terminate.

First Point.—How men become wicked. We cannot accuse God as the cause of this mingling of good and bad which afflicts the Church so much; every sinner must accuse himself only for his perversions. God has done everything for us that we should be good and virtuous. Not to mention here the sacrifice of the cross, which has been the principle of all justice and every virtue worthy of the name, how many graces have followed for us? Grace of the sacraments, grace of holy inspiration, grace of instruction and good example. There has been no admixture; yet after all this the servants of the good master were obliged to say: "Master, have you not sown good grain in your field? How comes it we find cockle there?" Was ever reply more just? "It is my enemy that has done this."

Yes, the demon, ever hostile to Jesus, and the passions ever hostile to our happiness—these are the enemies whose artifices and cruel influence we must always fear.

And how does the demon come to pervert even the most virtuous hearts and subject them to his rule? Jesus Himself tells us; he comes in the night, and as a thief. Well does Satan know that, if he presented sin in its true colors to an innocent soul, he should be surely rejected; therefore he presents it under a deceitful color and as if in the night. He persuades us that this thought, this doubt, this society, this association is most innocent, and under the pretext of that pretended innocence we yield and insensibly entangle ourselves in his snares. The evil which is the consequence of our want of foresight is not perceived at once, but it is not the less real. Thus the cockle while it is only in the germ does not appear, but after its growth it saddens our heart. We must constantly watch and be on our guard, if we would protect our hearts from the first attacks of evil; every temptation is easily rejected at the outset, but once let it enter the soul, it will be a difficult thing to drive it out. Therefore it is our blessed Saviour gives us this advice, to which we cannot be too faithful: "Watch," not indeed to hinder the temptation: that is impossible; but "lest you enter into temptation"—that is, not to allow it to enter your heart.

Second Point.—Why does God allow this mingling of the good and the wicked? It is through His

bounty for sinners; the tolerance which God manifests for them is a marvel of His mercy. "The long patience of God," says St. Paul, "invites sinners to repentance." Isaias says "it is to pardon them that he awaits them;" and the prophet Ezechiel adds: "God does not wish the death of a sinner, but that he may be converted and live." We cannot but admire here the unspeakable goodness of God. If divine justice had struck you when you were under the yoke of sin, where would you be now? Alas, even in this very moment where would you go, if the Supreme Judge came to demand the account which you must one day render?

With regard to the just, their mingling with sinners serves for their sanctification. It is in persecutions that virtue is purified; it is in temptations it is strengthened; virtue must be exercised if it shall become sustaining. The trials of every kind to which the wicked subject the good keep them in continual activity and hinder them from growing weary in well-doing. Virtue is never more beautiful than when it is victorious over illusions, seductions, bad examples, contempt, threats, and the persecutions of the world, which are always anxious to corrupt and desirous of being corrupted.

Third Point.—What should our conduct be with regard to sinners? The tolerance which God manifests towards them must oblige us to tolerate them also, and to treat them with sweetness and indulgence. And by what right could you reject those whom God Himself tolerates? Perhaps this im-

pious one or that sinner, whose conduct is revolting to you, may be destined to become a vessel of election. Perhaps these sinners may be called to a higher sanctity than you whose indiscreet severity would hurl anathemas against them. Alas! you who have such great need of indulgence, how can you show such little indulgence to others?

A second duty towards sinners is to labor as much as you can for their conversion. There are two means to attain this desirable end, and the first is our own example. This means is, the first of all, the most efficacious and most free from all inconvenience. We should give to sinners a salutary horror for vice by the sight of our own virtues, and by seeing what we are they shall learn to blush for what they are.

The second means to convert the wicked is prayer. The prayers of the just shall procure for them the grace of conversion. To the prayers of St. Stephen and St. Monica the Church is indebted for her two great lights—St. Paul and St. Augustine. God wishes only to pardon and to bless, but His mercy must be implored by the prayers of the just. By the mouth of His prophet He tells us: "I have sought a man who shall stand between My justice and the sinner, to arrest My arm, but I have not found him." Make it your duty to interpose between God and so many sinners who are rushing blindly to the abyss; this should be a sweet duty to discharge when it is a question of obtaining the conversion of a friend or the salvation of a father

or a mother. How can you refuse to procure for yourself a joy so worthy of a Christian heart?

Fourth Point.—How shall the mingling of the good and bad terminate? By the chastisement of the wicked and the recompense of the good. “At the time of the harvest, I shall say to the reapers, Gather up first the cockle and bind it in bundles to burn, but the wheat, gather into my barn.” Behold the destiny of both: strive to comprehend the consequences, first with regard to sinners. The words of the parable alone suffice to make you appreciate the rigorous chastisement which awaits them. The time of the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. In the harvest time the cockle is gathered and given to the flames, and so the Son of man, at the end of the world, shall send His angels, who shall take from His kingdom all scandalous sinners and those who have committed iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Behold the frightful destiny of the wicked. But oh, how much the destiny of the just is to be envied! Jesus Himself says: “Then the just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” He then adds: “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”

O my God, who is there that shall not be awakened from sleep, in reflecting on these great truths? Let the impious and libertine close their ears, lest they should hear, but it shall be their own folly and

misfortune. For myself I ask, O my God, a docile heart to profit by such an important lesson. Detach my heart from all that is transitory, that I may comprehend and taste what is eternal. Ah, Lord, grant that Thy justice may terrify me, that Thy goodness may assure me, that Thy law may be my rule, and that, walking here below in Thy light, I may attain, one day, to Thy glory.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH.

THE grain of mustard seed, of which Jesus speaks to-day in the Gospel, which is the smallest of all . . . seeds and in time becomes one of the largest plants, is the natural emblem of the feeble beginning and the rapid progress of Christianity. This association of extreme weakness and all-powerful strength in religion is the most striking proof of its divinity. You will comprehend it, if you consider, on the one hand, the obstacles which were opposed to the establishment of Christianity, and, on the other, the seeming weak means which have surmounted every opposition.

First Point.—The obstacles which opposed the establishment of religion came from within herself and from the world without. She had against her the obscurity of her dogmas. In fact, she labored to obtain from pagan peoples the abandonment and the sacrifice of all their beliefs, and also to ask them to adopt mysteries which were wholly inexplicable to reason—the mystery of but one God the Creator, and in this only God three persons who participate in the divinity without dividing it, and a unity of nature in a trinity of persons. With this mystery of the Trinity there was another still more incom-

prehensible, viz., a God made man. To these two great mysteries join the dogma of original sin and all the truths associated with and dependent on it—the human race, whole and entire, tainted by the fault of only one person! even children stained in the wombs of their mothers; a virgin who gives birth and yet without ceasing to be a virgin; a God who dies on a cross, and this first sacrifice to be renewed on our altars from age to age; priests clothed with the power of pardoning sins; and, what is more prodigious still, these priests at the altar distributing to the faithful their God, who after redeeming them nourishes them with His substance! Behold some of the truths which the apostles preached. What man could have dared to invent such a doctrine? What men would have been so senseless as to preach it, or to believe it, if it had no other support than the mere word of a man?

Religion had against her the severity of her morality. There was in her teachings no sweet or convenient philosophy which smiled on the passions, which promised festivals, or invited her followers to joys and pleasures. No; it is a religion of detachment, abnegation, and penance; her precepts and especially her maxims are fearful to nature. You can form some idea of the opposition that religion must contend against in the world, if you recall the strange words by which the Son of man begins His moral code. “Blessed are they”—but who are “they”? The rich or the powerful ones of the world? Hitherto this was the universal belief, but

it was an error which the world loved to believe. But Jesus exclaimed: "Blessed are they who mourn." "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake." He had already said: "He who wishes to come after Me must deny himself; he must take up his cross daily and follow Me." These maxims and these precepts were far from being attractive, it must be admitted, especially for men who were habituated to the sensuality and luxury which the pagan religion authorized. These teachings were, therefore, a second obstacle—humanly speaking, insurmountable—to the enterprise of the apostles.

To these obstacles add the prejudices which the Christian religion must at once develop. It was a new religion; it had just been born; and the disgraceful punishment of its Author had already attached to it a character of ignominy and disgrace. A religion which attacked every prejudice, every habit, and every popular belief must necessarily have against her the natural repugnances, the force of inclination, the tyranny of habit, the impressions of education and of custom. Humanly speaking, contempt and public ridicule should welcome these twelve miserable fishermen, preaching a God crucified and imploring the homages of a pagan world for a man attached to an infamous gibbet.

Second Point.—You have just seen the obstacles which arose for the apostles from the very nature of their enterprise. Consider the obstacles which they were obliged to overcome from the world with-

out. The epoch when they received their mission to found a new religion precisely coincided with the age of Augustus,—this famous age, which suggests to our mind the idea of exalted tastes, talents, and genius; an age rich in great orators, philosophers, poets, and historians; but, let us add, the age of corruption as well as of science. It was to such men, who were vain of their knowledge, that the apostles came to preach a doctrine whose dogmas appeared shocking to reason. It was to these men, plunged in delicacy and luxury, that they came to prescribe rules of conduct which wounded the most imperious desires of their hearts.

But these obstacles, however great they may be, are nothing compared with the efforts which the whole world made to hinder the establishment of Christianity. And what do we see at the birth of the Church? Hell unchained raises against her all the powers of earth. Philosophers and a multitude of sophists, spread out in the East and the West, join their talents and their lights to arrest the progress of Christianity. They pervert its dogmas, revile its mysteries, and ridicule its worship. Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian compose lampoons, in which they display all the resources of their genius, to uphold idolatry and to decry the new religion.

To the perfidy of reasoning and of calumny the bloodiest persecutions are added. The people arise as one man against the faithful; the cities reject them from their walls; while the provinces arm themselves with the firm intent of extermination.

Nor is this enough: legal persecution is organized, public force is opposed as a huge barrier to the progress of Christianity. The emperors, by their edicts, point out what must be the vigilance and cruelty of the magistrates. Persecution becomes general in the whole empire; everywhere the Christians are pursued as public enemies; neither the bosom of their families, nor the crevices of the rocks, nor the solitude of the deserts shall shield them from the rigor of the laws. When the ordinary punishments did not suffice, new torments were invented or the old ones were renewed, which are enough to make one shudder. Neither rank, age, sex, virtue, services rendered to the country, in fact nothing could pardon the crime of being a Christian. The persecution organized against the disciples of Christ was not a persecution of some days, or some years, but it was by ages that we must count the persecutions of the Church. We cannot follow it during three hundred years except by the traces of blood which was shed and by the light of the funeral piles kindled against her. These are the obstacles which Christianity was obliged to overcome even at her very birth.

Now that you know both the project of the apostles and the obstacles which opposed them in their enterprise, strive to see if success were possible in the ordinary course of things. On the one hand, there is a religion, sweet, pompous, and agreeable, which is believed to have been established by the gods and which is considered as an-

cient as the world; on the other hand, a religion severe, mysterious, and wholly new. In the first were the sages, the philosophers, the armies, and the entire universe; in the second there were some ignorant men, without defence, without support, without assistance; on one side there were authority, inhumanity, fury; on the other there were weakness, patience, and death. On what side must victory come? Which one must win? Evidently the palm belongs to idolatry. But no; the emperors from their high thrones ordain that the gods must be adored. But the gods are despised. Twelve Galileans summon the universe to the feet of their crucified Master; and the world hastens to obey them, in spite of tortures, scaffolds, and funeral piles. Can you not see here the finger of God? It is visible to all eyes; and if this submission of the human race has not been secured by the force of miracles, the conversion of the world would be more strange and astonishing than all miracles.

O my God, how I love to reflect on those prodigies which prove the divinity of the Church; my faith in them becomes livelier and more profound; may my love for them become more ardent and more generous.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS AND THE VINEYARD.

First Point.—Under the figure of the father of the family who goes out early in the morning . . . to engage laborers for his vineyard, it is easy to recognize God, the common Father of all men. By the agency of His ministers or by the secret promptings of grace He does not cease to call us to Himself, and entreats us to labor in His vineyard, that is to say, in the cultivation of our soul. If the vineyard in which the father of the family sends his workmen represents a figure of the soul, it is in accordance with the word of God itself. In fact, everywhere in Holy Scripture we find that God claims our souls as His domain. And this is, after all, only just, since we belong to Him by the most legitimate titles. Is it not He who has formed us with His own hands? Is it not from Him that we hold all that we have and all that we are? And not content with having created our soul and enriched it with the most magnificent gifts, God has reconquered it from the demon by redeeming it with His blood; hence we belong to Him by the triple right of birth, conquest, and love. The soul thus redeemed God places in our keeping; it is a

trust He has confided to us; it is the field which He commands us to cultivate and make fruitful for Him.

If the field of our soul remain sterile, this fault cannot be imputed to the Father of the family, since He has done for her all He could do. He has placed her in the bosom of the Church, where she receives the abundance of graces which God does not cease to pour out on this blessed soil; He surrounds her with the sacraments, and she participates in all the benefits which Jesus has merited by His death. She has been overwhelmed by every kind of grace and enriched by every blessing. Can she ask of God anything more? In confiding to us the culture of a land thus prepared, has He not the right to expect some fruit in return? Here reflect seriously on yourself; recall the graces you have hitherto received, all the means of sanctification which have been lavished on you, and ask yourself what return you have made?

Second Point.—The different hours at which the father of the family sends the laborers to his vineyard mark the different ages at which we give ourselves to the service of God: infancy, youth, mature years, and old age. At all times of our life, the Father of the human race, our first, our truest Father, comes to us to urge us to labor for our sanctification. He it is who always makes the first advances. He goes out to seek us in the public place, that is to say, in the midst of the dissipations of life, in the tumult of business, in the pleasures of the world. Our very faults do not discourage Him;

however great they may be, still His merciful goodness extends a pardon to us, and even urges us to merit it. He exhorts us to labor for our sanctification by the words which His ministers address us; by the religious objects which He exposes to our view; by the examples of virtue of which He makes us witnesses; by the disgrace with which He afflicts us; by the sudden deaths with which He visits our imitators and, perhaps, the accomplices of our sins; in a word, by all the circumstances with which He does not cease to surround us.

He especially exhorts us by the different sentiments which He excites within us. Have no doubt about it: these pious promptings which you experience, these holy thoughts which are suggested from time to time to your mind, this remorse which troubles you, the inquietudes which disturb you at the remembrance of your sins—these are all so many inspirations which God sends you and so many exhortations which He addresses you. If hitherto you have remained deaf to His invitations, you have reason to fear lest He cease to call you and, as it were, pursue you. Do not persevere in a resistance which may be fatal to you; cease to offer your refusal to His tenderness, and have for your soul as much pity as He Himself has for it.

Third Point.—The evening at last had come, and the father of the family said to his steward: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire beginning from the last even to the first." When the evening of life shall come—that solemn moment when our labors

shall have terminated and the recompense shall begin—we shall appear before the Steward, before Jesus, who has been appointed by His Father the Judge of the living and the dead. The soul at her departure from the body, in which she has so long been enclosed, shall see herself suddenly transported to the foot of the supreme tribunal, and the state in which she is found at that moment shall fix her lot for eternity. She shall be for all eternity either adorned and brilliant by the virtues with which she is enriched, or she shall be stained, disfigured, and punished for the sins with which she is covered.

And, perhaps, you are surprised to see the Master of the vineyard giving to all the laborers the same recompense,—the same to those who have labored only an hour as to those who have borne the heat and the burdens of the day. This is a warning which Jesus gives us. He would teach us that God shall dispense His recompense, not according to the time engaged, but according to the fervor which has been brought to the work. He regards the quality rather than the quantity of the labor; He weighs the work instead of counting it. Oh, happy are they who from their early youth have borne the yoke of the Lord; they certainly have great advantages; but, at last, the time of labor can also be rewarded because of the devotion which has been given. The traveller who starts on his journey too late may, by hastening, reach and even pass him who started early in the morning and who walked slowly.

And this also explains these other words of the Father of the family, viz.: "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Our divine Saviour does not wish us to understand that they who begin late in the service of God shall, therefore, precede those who shall have served Him early. Far from us this thought which is so injurious to divine justice and wisdom, and which should be calculated to encourage a delay of conversion so severely condemned. The sense of these words is, simply, that among those who are last in the order of their vocation very many shall become first in the order of glory; that we shall see sinners converted, more penetrated by humility, more inflamed by charity than certain just men; and that they who shall have labored for their salvation but a short time, and more effectively, shall surpass those who shall have labored a longer time, but with less zeal and ardor.

O my God, how long Thou hast already called me, and I have always resisted the voice of Thy grace! To-day Thou callest me still, and I wish to profit by this new appeal to labor in Thy vineyard, that is to say, for my salvation, with promptitude, since I have lost so much time; with fidelity, since all my moments belong to Thee; with perseverance, since the recompense is given only to those who labor until evening has come; with courage, to repair the lost time; with fervor, since Thy recompense shall be measured, not by the time spent in Thy service, but by the ardor with which it shall be accomplished.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE WORD OF GOD.

First Point.—Four kinds of hearers usually surround the Christian pulpit. The first are . . . likened to the great highway on which a part of the seed falls, as is mentioned in the Gospel parable to-day; the birds gather it up, or the travellers trample it under their feet. There are some characters so flippant that nothing can make them fixed or resolute, and whose lively imagination runs from one object to another, touching lightly on everything, without going to the bottom of any. They are enemies of all reflection and of all serious thought; meditation kills them. They are emotional and seek to satisfy their desires in silly romances and sensational sheets. You may see them receive the most serious truths with a smile of indifference, while they are suffused with tears at the recital of some romantic adventure. There can be nothing done with minds of this character. They come, indeed, at certain epochs during the year to hear God's word, but this is nothing serious for them. For them it is a pastime, a matter of curiosity, a means of distraction, and this is all. Holy advice, inspirations of grace, remorse of conscience which alarms them, the remembrance of

a past which causes them to blush, the terror of the future, the distaste for the world, the ordinary effect of the Gospel words, fall on their frivolous minds; but the different thoughts which pass and repass incessantly in them quickly efface even the least traces of the sacred word. They are the travelled and open highways; there the demon finds easy access, and before it can germinate he takes away the precious seed which is sown. This is the first obstacle to the development of the word of God—dissipation of mind.

Second Point.—"Another part fell on the stony ground, and, after springing up, was parched, because there was no moisture." Two kinds of hearers are figured by this stony ground in which the good seed cannot take root. The first and the most pitiable are those who are voluntarily deaf; their hearts are hardened and have become as stone with regard to the word of God. We could scarcely believe it, if there was not the saddest experience to convince us. There are men who are determined to remain just as they are. They come to hear the word of God spoken with a fixed resolution of not profiting by it. Let them hear the most touching exhortations, let the most terrible truths be presented to them, even if the grace of a retreat or a mission is offered them, it is all useless. They hear nothing, they will profit by nothing; they are the minds of that character which the prophet indignantly depicts when he exclaims: "They have closed their ears, lest they should hear." What

shall be the consequences of this studied and systematic resistance to the truth which is spoken exteriorly, and to the grace which urges and solicits interiorly? The very thought makes the heart grow cold. Our blessed Saviour exclaims: "Woe to you, Jerusalem, because if Tyre and Sidon had received the same graces as you have, they would have done penance in sackcloth and ashes. They shall be treated with less rigor than you." Yes, on the judgment day the infidel shall find an excuse in the misfortune of his birth, the heretic shall find an excuse in his ignorance, but you, reared in the bosom of the true Church, you, enlightened by so many lights and surrounded by so many graces, what excuse shall you have?

The second kind of hearers figured by the stony ground on which the precious seed falls is composed of all those Christians in whom certain passions have reached a state of habit. These form an almost insurmountable obstacle to the effects of the divine word. They hear it with pleasure, they admit the truth of all the reproaches hurled against them, and they would wish to be converted. Far from flying from the truth, they seek it. Should the preacher speak of the divine mercies, their hearts are touched; they make splendid promises. Casting a glance on the disorders of their past life, their eyes are bathed in tears; but scarcely have they left the house of God than everything is forgotten. The old habits weigh them down, they succumb to the first flame of passion, the good germ is parched;

the root is necessary if the good seed would develop. The second obstacle to the development of the word of God is a depraved will.

Third Point.—The third obstacle to the effect of the sacred word comes from attachment to the things of the world, whatever may be the name by which you designate them. They are represented by the thorns in which the good seed falls. It grows there, it is true; the germ is developed, but it is stifled at its birth by the thorns which cover and clog the soil. This is the too common effect of pleasures and riches. Whoever possesses them finds much difficulty in extricating his heart from them, and the heart which is charmed by them affords very little access to the truths of salvation. It is true that the riches and pleasures of life are not criminal things in themselves, but the abuse which we make of them, and the affection we have for them, soon render them criminal.

Our divine Saviour compares the pleasures of the world to thorns, because they produce the same effect. If at first they spread on our pathway some agreeable flowers, soon they will embarrass us. Then they will make us feel their sharpened points, and in time they will wound us. See that young man, or that young woman, who has heard the divine word with docility and who has profited by it, who carefully cultivates the virtues which grace has germinated in her heart, but who, at the same time, cherishes a love for the world; because this love, which is moderate in the beginning,

does not lead them into grave faults they imagine their virtue has received no wound; they think that in spite of the words of Christ they can serve two masters, and can continue to love the world without ceasing to love God. Fatal error; profane attachments grow and are strengthened, and in the same proportion religious inclinations are diminished and weakened.

The evil is so great that it is not perceived. There is surely an increase on the one hand, and a decrease on the other. Because the same pious practices are continued, do we believe the same virtues are also continued? The exterior acts are the same, but the heart is already changed. After having lost the taste for pious exercises, there is no delay in losing the use of them also. We easily omit what has been done without inclination and by constraint; moreover, we are skilful to find pretexts for shortening certain practices and omitting others; this remissness insensibly leads to sloth, and the interval from sloth to sin is very short. See how worldly attachments lead us, little by little, when they are not early uprooted.

O my God, to what can I attribute the little fruit I have hitherto drawn from so many instructions, unless to my bad dispositions? Have pity on me, Lord; change my heart. Give me a new one, in which Thy word shall remain, take root, and produce those fruits of salvation which Thou hast a right to expect from me.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

THE blind man of Jericho, whose healing is recounted in the Gospel of this day, is the image . . . of a soul which has fallen into spiritual blindness. Consider well the characters and the remedies of this moral blindness, which is the saddest of all.

First Point.—The characters of spiritual blindness. As Jesus approached Jericho He met a blind man seated on the wayside and asking alms. To understand this species of blindness which falls upon sinners you have only to look about you. Have you not been sometimes terrified at the insensibility of certain men for their eternal interests? Religion, which has converted the world by the sublimity of its teachings, is for them only a mass of gross reveries. Morality, which has brought on earth the reign of virtue, is in their eyes only fanaticism or superstition. The most heroic examples of virtue, instead of exciting in them a sentiment of admiration, only provoke pity and contempt. The most touching exhortations awaken their curiosity without appealing to their mind or heart. They commit crime after crime, violate the most sacred engagements, revel in blasphemy, and re-

main perfectly tranquil. Duties which every reasonable being owes to his Creator are put aside; laws of the Church, to which every Christian should be submissive, are trampled underfoot; they publish scandals and what is baneful to religion, and still believe themselves irreproachable, and ask what evil have they done. They live without remorse, and die undisturbed and fall into the avenging hands of God, whom they have despised. Can there be a state more fearful than this in the eyes of reason and in the eyes of faith?

The blind man of Jericho, to sustain his sad existence, asked of those who passed by an alms, which was often refused him. The Gospel says he was begging—*mendicans*. This is the second character of spiritual blindness. In the bosom of the Catholic Church, the depository of eternal truths, in the midst of that light with which Christianity has inundated the world, in the midst of so many means to find repose of mind and peace of heart, they who are stricken become mendicants. They ask of reason light which they have not; they ask of human wisdom the truth which she cannot give; they ask of pleasure joys of which she is ignorant. In their need of joys, their famished souls extend their hands to the passions and to pleasures. Each passion and each pleasure deposits an alms, but it is only an alms; it may suffice to solace, or rather to distract, the heart for a moment, but it is powerless to satisfy the need which devours it; it remains hungry and is always begging—*mendicans*.

The blind man of Jericho was seated on the way-side. This is the last trait which characterizes those who are spiritually blind. They are near the way which conducts to truth, to virtue, to life, and still they do not wish to enter there. Reflect on this expression, which contains a truth at once profound and true—"He was sitting." It is not said that he was standing and ready to walk, but he was seated; he remained there in stupid repose, unmindful of what was passing around him. This expression is sufficient to make us understand that he was satisfied in his unfortunate carelessness, preferring an unworthy repose to generous effort which would place him in the right way. This is only a too true picture of those sinners of whom we are speaking. They are outside the way which conducts to salvation, and are not striving to re-enter it. To do this they should be most active, and instructed in their duties, and resist their passions, or at least make some efforts; but they love their ease beyond anything else, and nothing can determine them to abandon their tranquillity. And thus the privation of all truth, the want of all good works, and complete carelessness of salvation are the characters of this terrible malady which is called spiritual blindness. We shall now see how it may be healed.

Second Point.—For a complete cure of spiritual blindness, the first thing which must be done by him who is afflicted is to be instructed in his religion and to make known his uncertainties and doubts to those who can resolve them. At the

sound of the voices which were about him and the noise made by the multitude which had followed Jesus, the blind man informed himself of all that passed. He asked "what it was." Well, Christianity passes near us, is about us on every side, with its laws, its dogmas, its blessings, its threats, and its promises. We should inform ourselves what it is, we should study the claims and proofs on which it rests, the duties it imposes, and labor earnestly to merit the blessings which it promises. We should avoid the evils with which it threatens us, since eternity is well worth the trouble which all this requires. Indifference in this matter is wholly unjustifiable.

The second thing to do in a case of spiritual blindness is to pray. Faith is a gift of God, and this gift we all receive in Baptism. This explains the facility with which we believe the highest mysteries, even in tenderest infancy, and as long as we preserve purity of heart. But when, by bad books, sinful conversations, voluntary doubts, and by indulgence of our passions we have driven the spirit of faith from our intelligence, we cannot again recall it, except by most fervent prayer. But you say, "I wish I could have faith!" Have you prayed to obtain it? Reflect on the prayer of the blind man imploring his healing, and strive to imitate his fervor. "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!" See how he feels his malady, how he desires a return of health. And what perseverance in his prayer! They who are near to him endeavor to

impose silence on him, but he seems unmindful of them and is not at all influenced by their words; he even cries louder still. From the moment you wish to belong to God the world will blame you. Prejudices, habits, passions shall strive to turn you away from prayer. However, still remain faithful to it, since your healing and your salvation will be due to your perseverance.

O my God, I address Thee with the prayer which the poor blind man employed—"Son of David, have pity on me!" Have pity, because of the sad state to which sin has reduced me. Make known to me my misfortune in its fullest extent; I do not know it sufficiently. Place in my heart a lively and profound sorrow for my sins, which should be there and which I do not find there. Inspire me with those strong, courageous, and efficacious resolutions which I strive in vain to form. Break these criminal attachments and these vicious habits which I have not the strength to break. Reform my sad inclinations which drag me down in spite of my feeble efforts. Have pity on me, Lord! Have pity on my weakness!

ASH WEDNESDAY.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

THE most important and the most necessary lesson which can be given to men is to remind them . . . that they are only dust and that they shall return to dust. It is the most important lesson, since on death depends their eternity; it is the most necessary lesson, because the thought of death is the thought which men reject with greatest care. Enter to-day into the spirit of the Church, and strive to procure for yourself a Christian death by preparing yourself for it seriously.

First Point.—The exercise of the preparation for death consists in being persuaded of death. It is difficult for one to prepare for something of which he is not yet convinced. Now there is nothing, or almost nothing, of which we are less persuaded than death. Indeed, we well know, in general, that we shall one day die; but we assure ourselves with the hope that it shall not be soon, that it shall not be in this sickness, that it shall not be to-day or to-morrow. However, what disposes us for a good death is not merely to know, in speculation, that we must die, but to be actually seized by this thought: I shall die and my hour approaches; I shall die,

and it shall be in some one of these years that I vainly promise myself; I shall die, and it shall be at the moment and in the manner that I had least suspected.

But what does the enemy of our salvation do? He does not strive to persuade us that we shall not die, but he persuades us that we shall not die, neither this week, nor this month, nor this year. It seems that we are even of the same mind as he is on that matter, for not only are we never well persuaded of death in the sense of which we have just spoken, but we do not wish to be, and we put away all thoughts from us that would serve to convince us of it. Hence it follows that, for the most part, men die without believing they are dying, and almost always with the presumptuous assurance of not dying. Hence it follows that these very men, to whom constantly and visibly, in the age and in the state in which they are, there remain fewer days to live, are those who labor most for life; hence it follows that the dying ones never know whether they are dying or not, because it is expected that they do not wish to know it and every one conspires to deceive them. Be on your guard against this danger, alas! so common, by making yourself familiar with the thought of death; and because it is the fear of death that makes the thought of it so painful, strengthen yourself against the fear of death by the motives of Christian hope and the holy ardor of divine charity. Say to yourself often: "Behold the Spouse comes. Let us go, my soul."

He comes, not to condemn you, but to crown you; expect him with confidence.

Second Point.—The second exercise of the preparation for death is vigilance against death. All uncertain as death is, I can act in such a manner that it will never surprise me. And how? By watching over myself. It is that which made the difference between the wise and foolish virgins. Here adore the providence of our God, who conceals from us the hour and the place and the manner of our death, to oblige us to be always on our guard and to sanctify all our life. To be for one moment without this Christian vigilance is to act against all the principles of wisdom, because an entire eternity is comprised in a single moment.

We fear death, but let this fear serve us as a defence against death itself. We do not wait to equip a vessel until it is on the high seas, tossed by tempest and waves. Let us guard against waiting to dispose ourselves for death until the moment when our senses shall be disturbed by the approach of death, and until we shall have lost their use. Jesus does not tell us to prepare ourselves then, but “to be ready.” Let us hold ourselves ready and always prepared. And why is the practice of this vigilance so necessary? To keep ourselves always in the state we should wish to die; at least, never to be in a state in which we should fear to die. According to this rule, if we were asked, “Are you ready?” what answer should we give? To do all our actions in view of death; that is to say, to act

in all things as we would wish to have done, at death. To know ourself well is to know our obligations, all the good which we should practise, all the evil we should avoid; to know the dangers which surround us and the means to preserve ourselves from them. To have for this examination, which is so important, a time marked in the year, in the month, in the week; to form these resolutions; to rule life after this study; to weep for the past, and to assure the future and constantly take new courage—thus it is that our fear shall be the beginning of wisdom, because it shall serve to excite our vigilance.

Third Point.—The third exercise of the preparation for death is the practical science of death. There is an apprenticeship to death, and we can from life learn to die well, and for that we have only to study what passes within us and about us. We die every day. No, it is not true, in the sense that we die but once. We die every hour, and in every hour we can die voluntarily and freely. When God declared to the first man that he should die as soon as he had disobeyed, the decree was executed in Adam at the moment he had violated the precept of the Lord. At once he became subject to all kinds of infirmities, and his body, degraded from the privilege of innocence, began to decay and consequently to die. Now, what took place for Adam has taken place for us also, and the pagans themselves recognized it. We deceive ourselves, said Seneca, in looking upon death as a

future thing; already, in great part, it has passed for us; and all that is past of our life, up to the present, belongs to death. Did not St. Paul say "he died daily"? If, then, we die every day, is it a difficult thing to learn to die? And since at every moment we die by necessity, what hinders us from accustoming ourselves to die by choice and will?

All the creatures which surround us teach us the science of death. And how? By leaving us, by separating from us, by ceasing to belong to us. We have only to interrogate ourselves, and all that there is in us shall tell us with unanimous voice that we must die. You are rich and in opulence, but you must die. You have credit and reputation, but you must die. You are young and in a position to taste the delights of the world, but you must die. This is the only language we hear, because God, in creating us, has engraved in the depth of our being this general response, that all the elements of which we are composed, by destroying one another, destroy us with them. Since everything concurs in teaching us to die, we are then very guilty in not being better acquainted and more experienced in the art of death.

O my God, purify my soul, detach my heart, in order that, being free from every bond, and living only for Thee, I may be ready to quit this earth at the first command that Thou shalt give me!

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE LENTEN TIME.

THE Church has had two principal reasons in instituting the holy time of Lent: to make us . . . fulfil the duty of penance, and to make us meditate on the sufferings of Christ.

First Point.—The first motive which seems to have influenced the Church in the institution of Lent has been to afford us an opportunity of fulfilling the law of penance. We cannot forget that there is a law which obliges all the children of Adam to do penance. This law has been proclaimed at the moment of the fall, and was again proclaimed by the Gospel, and at the time of our regeneration. This law is binding on us as men; since we are heirs to the sin of Adam, we are also heirs to the sentence which has condemned him to suffer.

This law is binding on us, also, as Christians, since it is only by fulfilling it we become like to our Model and Master. A great expiation has been consummated on Golgotha! Christians, children of the cross, fruits conceived amidst the heartrendings and agonies of Calvary; disciples of a God dead on the cross; sons of the King—but of a King crowned by sorrow; born to the purple—but the purple of His blood,—our life should not belie our origin!

The sacrifice of the Saviour has been complete in all that regards the person and the merits of the Victim; but this sacrifice should continue in His members, who with Him form but one and the same mystical body. His cross remains forever planted in the midst of His Church, to recall to us the obligation of attaching ourselves to it and of dying on it with Him; and there shall be something wanting to His passion, as St. Paul has understood it, if it is not accomplished, also, in our own body; if the blood of Jesus does not continue, in some way, to flow in the veins of His apostles and martyrs and confessors, and in all those who believe in Him, until the time when the whole Church shall have passed from the state of suffering and of combat to the possession of glory.

The law of penance is binding on us especially as sinners. Let us recall to mind all the transgressions which make us debtors to Divine Justice—and insolvent debtors, too, without any doubt, if God had not deigned to accept our feeble satisfactions in consideration of the superabundant merits of His Son. At this remembrance, does not your conscience tell you the necessity of chastising a rebellious flesh which has been so often the occasion and the instrument of your falls? Now, this penance, whose indispensable necessity you cannot forget, whether to make you “conformable to the image of the Son” or to expiate your countless prevarications,—do you do it? Alas!—you must admit it—your time is always ready, as the Saviour reproached

the Jews: I mean the time for your business, your pleasures, the time for sin; but the time of Jesus, the time of penance, is never ready or at hand. You put it off, and defer it, and expect every day that the time shall come; but the time never comes. Now, the Church comes to assist us in our weakness and in our cowardice. She strongly reminds you of this precept of penance, which your indifference neglects. From all the pulpits which are erected in the innumerable churches of the Catholic world the resounding voice is heard in unmistakable terms: "Unless you do penance you shall perish."

And, not content with reminding you of this great precept, the Church anticipates your indecision by determining the time when this duty will bind with greater rigor, and by indicating the most suitable manner of penance; thus, by a happy violence, she forces you, so to speak, to enter the way of penance by adding to the authority of God her own authority. In fine, that you may not escape the pursuit of Divine Justice, she, in a way, encloses you in a circle of forty days, and she will not allow you to depart until you shall have given these sacred duties a just satisfaction. Do you love your soul enough to understand and second the merciful intentions of the Church in your regard?

Second Point.—By instituting the Lenten time the Church wishes to make us meditate on the sufferings of Our Saviour. The mortification of the senses is not sufficient for salvation—it must be accompanied by compunction of heart. Now, what is more ca-

pable of exciting compunction in us than the meditation of a mystery as tender as it is terrible—the mystery of our redemption? Unquestionably we can obtain this compunction of heart by other considerations, drawn from the grandeur of God, or His justice, or the heinousness of sin; but the true source of tears—tears which flow from the heart as well as from the eyes; those tears which are sweet in their bitterness; which have the power to purify the soul, to strengthen it, to transform it, to create in it the new man,—the true source of such tears is in the cross; in the cross which illumines all the divine perfections, but in a manner so well arranged that His goodness dominates and absorbs all the other perfections, and all the rays of this grand glory melt away and are effaced in the single ray of love.

The cross is by excellence the Christian's book. Every one may read it. There, in characters visible to every eye and accessible to every intelligence, you may learn what is most important for every Christian to know. Behold why the Church unfolds its blood-stained pages during the holy exercises of Lent! Not only does she wish that we should recall the grand mystery of our redemption, but she also renders it in a way present and sensible by the vivacity and truth of her pictures, as an action which had passed under our very eyes. She sprinkles her children with ashes, she exchanges her vestments of joy which were worn on festival occasions, and assumes others of a sombre hue; she

sings, it is true, but her chants are from a voice broken with sobs and tears; she seems to fear the solitude, for her children are in such great sorrow; She invites them frequently to assemble in community for prayer, for the sacrifice of the Mass, and for pious reunions. We could say of her children that they are like a family bowed by sorrow, whose members have united to "weep for the loss of an only and well-beloved son." As the end approaches, the representation becomes more striking, and the impression of the death of the Man-God is more vividly felt. The very silence of His tomb seems to reign in the temple during the last days of the great and Holy Week. The stripped altars and the open and empty tabernacles leave nothing to behold except the cross unveiled—the cross which the Church only adores and only salutes in plaintive chants as our one, last, and only hope.

Allow your heart to go out to, and be touched by, these holy impressions if you wish to respond to the intentions of the Church. Let your faith lead you to assist at each of these terrible scenes of which the drama of redemption is composed; gather with love the drops of bloody sweat falling from Jesus in the Garden of Olives; place your lips on each imprint of that precious blood which has reddened the road to Calvary; also to each of those sacred wounds from which spring the running waters of life eternal. Accompany by your sighs and tears, and with the daughters of Jerusalem, this new Isaac up to the hill-top of Calvary, and do not descend from the

holy mountain where the greatest of sacrifices has been accomplished until you have struck your breast with the centurion ; or, rather, do not quit the holy mountain, but remain there, crucified with Jesus ; nail to the cross, not your feet and hands, but your sins and defects and desires, for which the Saviour has died ; it shall be in vain that He died for your sins if you also do not die to them, to arise with Him to a new life.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

DOCILITY IN FOLLOWING THE VOICE OF JESUS.

“AND lo, a voice out of the cloud saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; . . . hear ye Him.” It is God Himself who commands us to hear Jesus and obey Him. Be then attentive to this salutary voice, and consider in how many ways He makes Himself heard.

First Point.—Jesus makes us hear His voice by the decisions of the Church, to whom He has confided, with His teaching, the prerogative of His infallibility. He has promised to be with her even to the end of time, assuring her that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.” They would prevail if error could creep into her teachings. Long before, He had said: “He who hears you, hears Me; he that despises you, despises Me, and in Me he despises Him who sent Me.” It was to the apostles, and, in their person, to all their successors, that Jesus addressed these words. They evidently prove that the duty of all the faithful is to hear the Church and to obey her. You should therefore believe firmly the truths which she teaches, reject with indignation the errors she condemns, and receive with docility the instructions which she pub-

lishes, and practise with exactitude the precepts which she dictates. This submission which you owe to the Church imposes on you the obligation of rejecting every teaching which does not emanate from her, and to reject as deadly poison every doctrine which is not presented by her, and to carefully put away whatever heresy insidiously distributes as evangelical doctrine, as falsehood and error. Stop for a moment and consider in your own heart what respect you have shown to the pastors of the Church and to your fathers in the faith. In what terms do you speak of them? With what docility do you hear their teachings?

Second Point.—Jesus also speaks to you most directly by the exhortations of His pastoral ministry. But do you hear Him according to the precept which God the Father has given you? Are you zealous to hear His salutary instructions? And when you assist at them what spirit do you bring to them? Is it a spirit of contention or of obedience? What account must you one day render for so many means of salvation, either absolutely abandoned by your negligence or made useless by your vicious dispositions? The divine word is tiresome for you, and you do not go to hear it; or it is a vain and frivolous amusement, and you receive no fruit from it. Either you do not hear God's voice or you hear it without proper dispositions; and by your refusal to hear it, or by the abuse you make of it, you turn against yourself this precious blessing of God. Take, therefore, the serious resolution to change

this condition, which can only have for you the saddest effects.

Third Point.—Jesus speaks to you also by the holy thoughts which He suggests to you. The natural horror which you feel for evil is His voice which prompts you to avoid it; the remorse which disturbs your conscience is His voice which calls you to penance; the desire you experience to do some good work is His voice which encourages you to do it; these pious promptings which move your soul are His voice which urges you to love Him. Hence the prophet exclaims: “I shall hear what the Lord shall deign to say within me!” You also should give ear, and listen attentively and continually to that voice with which He penetrates your heart. It is a sweet voice, and to hear it you must listen and with greatest recollection. Alas! how this want of recollection has been the occasion of losing so many salutary inspirations! How often has God spoken to you, now by suggesting a good work, and again by turning you away from a bad one; here recalling to your mind the precepts of His law, there by holding out to you threats or promises; while you, carried away by your dissipation, have not heard Him? You have despised His gifts, ignored His graces, been deaf to His entreaties, and you have been punished by the loss of His blessings which He offered you.

Fourth Point.—Jesus employs another language more sensible than the preceding, and it is still less heard: it is the language of circumstances. All

the events which pass under our eyes are so many instructions which God gives us. When He hurls His thunders on empires, and overthrows them by revolutions, He reveals to us the instability of all things human; when He casts down from highest power those whom He had exalted, He teaches us the nothingness of earth's greatness; when He strikes down and suddenly removes from earth the victims of His justice, he warns us of the certainty of death and the uncertainty of the hour in which it shall come to us. Examples of virtue teach us what we should do, while examples of vice tell us what we should avoid. By prosperity He invites us to return thanks, by adversity He engages us to return to Him. To meet with a poor person is an exhortation to almsgiving; the sight of a church is an invitation to prayer, and a single glance at the cross is enough to recall every memory of the Passion. In the privacy of our homes as well as in the public places, in the silence of solitude as well as in the dissipation of society, Jesus speaks to us everywhere. To-day, in the Gospel, the heavenly Father tells us to hear Him. But, oh, how senseless we are! During life, we are surrounded by His teachings and do not heed them. We walk through life contrary to His warnings, His exhortations, or His entreaties, without reflecting on them or appreciating them. Circumstances strike us, but they do not instruct us. We speak of them, reason about them, and seek their causes, but never calculate their effects. The only thing we do not

see in them is what would be most useful for us to see, viz., that God has permitted them for our instruction, and to exhort us and to move our hearts. Strive, therefore, to recognize the voice of Jesus whenever He speaks to you. Your sanctification depends on your docility, and, as a consequence, your eternal salvation.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

JESUS EXPELS THE DUMB DEVIL.

THIS sick man, whom the devil rendered dumb, is the figure of spiritual dumbness, a malady . . . of the soul as dangerous as it is common. Speech has been given us to pray, to confess our sins, and to glorify God. Let us reflect how this spiritual dumbness hinders us from fulfilling this threefold duty.

First Point.—The dumb devil hinders us from praying. Prayer is the weapon which religion puts in the hands of the Christian to make him triumph over every obstacle. The effects of prayer are truly admirable. It is omnipotent over the heart of God, and causes the thunder to fall from His avenging hand; it also opens the treasury of His mercies. Prayer is the help of our pilgrimage here on earth and gives us the strength to fulfil all our duties, consoles us in the trials of life, and obtains for us the most complete success in all our enterprises. Prayer is the nourishment of our Christian life, and is to the soul what food is for the body. Hence the prophet David exclaims: "My heart is dried up and my soul is languishing because I have refused the bread of prayer."

Well does the demon know that our sanctification

depends on our fidelity to prayer, and hence the first object of his efforts is to cause us to neglect it. And then what happens? Alas! you know it, perhaps, by your own experience. At the time when a young man enters society, when the passions are developed with violence, when dangers become most numerous, he experiences an almost insurmountable distaste for prayer. Hitherto prayer was easy for him, the holy exercises of piety were for him full of sweetness. But on the day of trial everything is changed, and he must do violence to himself if he would pour out his soul in prayer. The more one yields to this distaste, the greater it becomes; and, in losing her conversation with God, the soul has lost every energy for good.

But how does this change come? We may designate several causes. First, there are the passions. By this, we do not mean precisely those violent disturbances which cast the soul down to the deepest depths, but we mean every sentiment which habitually dissipates the mind and disturbs the heart—a too lively preoccupation for even the most legitimate interests, for study, for our future; too sensible attachments, which win the hearts of creatures and draw them away from God. The habit of worldly pleasures begets those tastes which are wholly mundane, and which quickly take the place of things which belong to God. Romantic readings give birth to frivolous thoughts. They excite the imagination and flatter bad passions. When the soul does not strive to resist these siren voices, she

becomes their slave. She strives in vain to be recollected with God. Like to a restive horse which refuses to be directed except in his ordinary ways, so the imagination, accustomed to run with a free rein, objects to thoughts which are not familiar to her. If, therefore, you wish to preserve a spirit of prayer, which is indispensable to a Christian life, then keep the thought of God in your heart by frequently turning to Him; exercise the greatest vigilance in avoiding flights of imagination; and faithfully resist whatsoever may degenerate your mind and heart. Have you done this hitherto, and are you resolved to do so henceforth?

Second Point.—The second duty of a Christian is to confess his sins. After prayer, there is nothing more important to sustain Christian life than frequent confession. There it is that the soul finds strength by virtue of the sacrament; there she finds encouragement in the advice of the confessor; and there she finds light in the examination of conscience. The very thought that you must confess is a powerful motive to avoid sin, and hence the efforts of the demon and his artifices to hinder you from this salutary duty. Strange coincidence! The repugnance for confession is felt at the same moment as the distaste for prayer. As long as the heart is pure and free from all affection to sin, confession is a sweet and easy duty; we cheerfully and faithfully respond to the voice of our confessor. As soon as we are guilty, we experience the contrary disposition. And so we are tempted to aban-

don confession, and, in fact, we abandon it precisely at the moment when it is most necessary.

The ruses which the demon employs to hinder us from this powerful means of perseverance are numerous. He presents so many difficulties in the way of perseverance! He presents piety under such severe views! He so terrifies us by the combats we must endure, the victories we must win, that we lay down our arms and with tears exclaim, I cannot be saved! We forget that if the human heart can do nothing by itself, it is omnipotent when sustained by God's grace. Ah, it is only too true that by ourselves we cannot remain virtuous. Why then do we rely on ourselves? We should pray with more fervor and confess our sins more frequently.

Confession is neglected because of the shame attached to the avowal of sins. It is, indeed, shameful to do that which is culpable, but it is a brave and truly great soul that can confess its guilt. It is related that one day while Socrates was walking in one of the streets of Athens, he noticed one of his disciples departing from a house of questionable character. The disciple, confused at having been seen by his teacher, endeavored to conceal himself. But the philosopher approached him and said: "You should have been ashamed to enter that place, instead of being ashamed to leave it." Moreover, shame is an expiation of sin; if you refuse to blush at the feet of Jesus in the tribunal of penance, you must blush before Jesus who shall

be your Judge, and in presence of the assembled universe.

Third Point.—The third duty of the Christian is to defend the cause of God and his neighbors, when both have been injured. This is a rigorous duty, and one which is never neglected when there is a question of a father, a friend, or a benefactor. But God is more than all that for us. How then can we be wanting in our duty when there is question of His glory? Whence comes this silence which seems to authorize certain impious words? Whence comes the cowardly smile to our lips on hearing indecent railleries against religion, its mysteries, its ceremonies, its ministers, pious persons, and even against pious practices? Do we not see that by such conduct on our part, by this tacit approbation given to those who outrage our faith, we perform an act of impiety, we authorize blasphemies, and embolden the blasphemers? When on His way to Calvary Jesus met a generous woman who, braving the soldiers and enemies of the Saviour, came to wipe away the blood and the dust which disfigured His august face. But, alas! every day the religion of Jesus is disfigured, outraged, covered with mire, and there is not one soul generous enough to take up its defence and avenge the outrage.

If religion requires us to defend the cause of God, charity makes it a duty for us to defend our neighbor when his reputation is compromised. But even when human respect renders us dumb in the first case, a secret jealousy or a criminal curiosity ren-

ders us dumb in the second. Instead of closing our ears to falsehood, we provoke it, we listen to it with pleasure, and become responsible for all the evil that is spoken and for all the wrong which is done.

O my God, make me understand the duties which the gift of speech imposes on me. May I never use it except for the sanctification of my soul, the edification of my neighbor, and to bless Thy holy name.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

ON PROVIDENCE.

THE goodness with which Jesus multiplies the bread, to meet the needs of the multitude that . . . followed Him, is the image of that universal providence with which God provides for His creatures. Let us meditate to-day on the certainty of that providence, and our duties towards it.

First Point.—The certainty of providence. Providence is that supreme wisdom of God which guides all events; that paternal attention by which He preserves the moral and physical order which He has established in the world from the first instant of creation. We cannot question it for a moment if we but reflect on what passes under our eyes every day. In fact, what do we see? We see an admirable spectacle, of which the prophet gives us a description in his sublime canticle: “Lord, my God, how magnificent are Thy works. Thou hast arranged and governed everything with admirable wisdom. The ocean surrounds the earth as one vast cincture; it obeys Thy voice, and never overflows the boundaries which Thou hast fixed for it. Thou hast opened in the valleys the most abundant fountains and springs, to which the animals of the field and the wild beasts of the forest come to slake

their thirst. Thou hast prepared trees on the mountain tops, in which the birds may build their nests, and in the crevices of the rocks Thou hast made dwelling-places, in which the hunted stag comes to deposit her young in safety. The lions that dwell in the deserts and the monsters that live in the deepest abysses ask of Thee their prey and Thou providest it for them. My Lord and my God, how great Thou art in all Thy works. Thou hast disposed and governed all things with admirable wisdom."

These are the words of a prophet, but hear the same idea from another tongue. If God has created, He has done it through love, and, moreover, He is full of sweetest providence for every being which has come from His creative hand. Has He not cared for the smallest flowers of the valley, and for the sparrows which ask Him for food? Is it not He who clothes the sheep in their woolly fleece? Not a hair from your head falls to the ground that does not engage His attention. He cares for the flowers and the animals; and there is not a little insect buzzing in the atmosphere which is not the object of His divine attention. If this little worthless being has blood and veins, it is God who has formed it; if it finds on its way something to eat and to drink, it is God who prepares for it a bed and a table. What a loving providence!

The words of Jesus established the certainty of providence in the most formal manner. He says: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow,

nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Consider also the lilies of the field, how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these." If then, your Father who is in heaven takes so much care of a fragile flower, and feeds the birds, what care shall He not take of you, who are His children and who are of greater value to Him than all the animals of the earth? And He adds: "Be not solicitous for what you shall eat, or wherewith you shall be clothed. Your heavenly Father knows you have need of all these things." These words from the lips of the Saviour should suffice to calm all inquietude.

Besides these words and promises, which attest the providence of God there are facts which also give us fullest testimony. The brethren of Joseph wished to oppose the designs of Providence, and everything they did against him served only to favor his exaltation. The same Providence which had saved Moses from the waters of the Nile makes him become the liberator of his people. The same Providence which delivered the Chosen People of God from the Egyptians, and which conducted and miraculously nourished them in the desert, led them to the Promised Land and performed for them a thousand prodigies. This same Providence it was that protected the chaste Susanna, Daniel in the lion's den, the young Hebrews in the fiery furnace, and countless others who are spoken of in the

history of the Church. It is, then, demonstrated by the words of Holy Scripture and by the testimony of history that there is a Providence.

Second Point.—Our duties towards Providence. The first duty is to submit ourselves to its decrees. God has a dominion which is absolute and universal over all His creatures; He is our Master, and we are His servants; He is our King, we are His subjects; He is our Father, we are His children; it is therefore just that we should obey Him. This obedience is not only most reasonable, but is most necessary. In fact, He is the Sovereign Master and there is “no one who can resist Him.” And we must, therefore, accomplish His will in all things and always. Hence, whether we wish it or whether we do not wish it, it is certain that things happen as God has decreed in His supreme wisdom. If we understand how to submit ourselves with docility to the decrees of His providence, we fulfil our duty, and our submission shall have its recompense. But, should we revolt or murmur against His providence, the will of God shall be accomplished and we shall suffer without merit and without consolation.

St. Chrysostom compares those who murmur against divine Providence to the tempests on the ocean; we see the impetuous elements hurl the waves to heaven like so many mountains, but it is always useless. They are obliged to obey the voice of the Master, and they come to crush their pride against the grains of sand on the shores

which mark their limit. And so it is with those who seek to escape the laws of Providence; they strive in vain: the will of God must always be accomplished. Understand these truths, and learn to be courageous in all the difficult circumstances of life; submit yourselves generously to the will of God, and repeat in the depth of your heart these words which fell from divine lips: "May Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

We should abandon ourselves to Providence with a sweet confidence. God is our Father, and has all the tenderness of a father. And this is not enough; He has for us all the tenderness of a mother. He tells us: "Even if a mother should forget her child, I shall never forget you." What a sense of security these words should give us! The eye of God watches over us, even as the eyes of a mother watch over her beloved child. Strive, therefore, to develop in your heart the sentiments which St. Francis de Sales expresses when he says: "Our Lord has taught me to confide in His providence from my youth, and, if I were to be born again, I would allow myself to be governed, even in the smallest matters, by this divine providence, with all the simplicity of a child and with a profound contempt for all human prudence." Indeed the designs of God are impenetrable, but they are always sweet and gentle to those who confide in Him.

Therefore let us permit His providence to guide our soul, which is in His keeping, and it will surely

land us in a haven of safety. Blessed is he who confidently trusts in His providence, since God can give and God wishes to give us every good and perfect gift. On the contrary, unhappy is he who places his trust in creatures. They promise everything but give little, and you must pay dearly for the little you receive. This is why we embark on the sea of divine Providence without food, without oars, without sails or any provision. Let us leave everything to the care of our divine Lord, without reserve of any kind: His goodness shall abundantly provide for everything.

PASSION SUNDAY.

THE TESTIMONY WHICH JESUS GIVES OF HIMSELF.

THE noble assurance with which Jesus defies His enemies to accuse Him of sin furnishes us an . . . occasion of meditating on the beautiful character of the Saviour of men. You shall find in it one of the most striking proofs of His divinity. It shall be sufficient for us to propose these two questions: Is Jesus, as He said, the Son of God? and, is His testimony true?

First Point.—In order to escape from the crushing proof which follows from the testimony of Jesus in favor of His divinity, the infidels pretended that Jesus said He was, indeed, the envoy of God, but that He never affirmed that He was God. To demonstrate the falsity of this assertion, we have only to open the Holy Gospels. Jesus there gives testimony to His divinity at first in presence of His friends and disciples. One day, while speaking with them, He asked: "Whom do men say that I am?" The disciples answered: "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist, others that Thou art Jeremias, others that Thou art Elias, and others still that Thou art one of the prophets." But Jesus again asked: "Whom do you think I am?" Then Peter answered: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living

God." Instead of reproving him or correcting Peter's statement as a blasphemy, Jesus replied to Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of John, because flesh and blood have not revealed this to thee, but My Father who is in heaven."

In another circumstance, Philip said to Jesus: "Lord, show us the Father and that will satisfy us." But Jesus, being indignant at this request, answers him: "What! I am so long with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who sees Me, also sees the Father. How then can you say, show us the Father; do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?" On another occasion, always wishing still more to affirm His divine affiliation, He said to one of His disciples: "God has so loved the world that He has sent His only Son, that he who believes in Him shall not be condemned, but he who does not believe in Him shall be condemned, because he does not believe in the name of the only Son of God." Jesus, therefore, proclaimed Himself as the Son of God, and in the strictest sense He claimed that He was in the Father and that the Father was in Him; and that to see Him was to see the Father. The testimony which Jesus gives of His divinity to His friends and to His disciples is evident.

The testimony which He gives of Himself in presence of the people is no less evident and no less explicit. The multitudes which surrounded Him exclaimed: "How long shall you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us clearly and

openly." Jesus answers them: "I speak to you and you do not believe Me. The works which I have done give testimony of Me. My Father and I are one." At this statement, which told everything, the Jews gathered stones to throw at Him. And Jesus said to them: "I have shown you the works of My Father; for which of these works do you cast stones at Me?" The Jews answered: "For none of Thy works, but because of Thy blasphemy; because, being only a man, Thou hast made Thyself God." The language of Jesus before the people had the same signification as the language before the disciples: He clearly and unmistakably declared, "My Father and I are one."

But Jesus is cited before the council of the ancients, the priests and magistrates of Judea. After testimony more or less inconsistent, the high priest puts the question squarely; he arises and addresses the accused this solemn adjuration: "I adjure you by the living God, to tell us, if you are the Christ, the Son of God." And Jesus answered him by these two words: "I am." And to confirm His avowal He immediately added: "I am He, and you shall see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." So that before His friends, before the people, and before the magistrates, Jesus proclaimed Himself the Son of God, the only Son, the Son equal to His Father, one with His Father, and being in His Father and His Father in Him. This is the testimony which Jesus gives of Himself. And

what a testimony! Only to think! a man, a being of flesh and blood, who has before Him not only the weakness of life but the weakness of death,—a mere man,—and He dares to proclaim Himself a God! It is the first time in the history of the world that it has ever happened! It is evident that a mere man is not capable of such bold falsehood.

Second Point.—But is the testimony which Jesus renders of Himself true? To doubt it, we must accept one of these two propositions: either Jesus did not believe what He said, or He believed it without being what He declared Himself to be. In the first supposition, He would be deceitful, since He proclaimed Himself for what He was not; in the second supposition he would be insane, since, being only a man, He believed Himself a God. In both suppositions we are presented with an impossibility.

It is impossible to make of Jesus a deceitful man. According to the avowal of all, even of those who do not believe in Him, Jesus is a good and wise man, a man of incomparable character. He has done so many wonderful things, such holy things, that even His very enemies always pay homage to His works and to His person. If the world has seen black and impious spirits who have dared to blaspheme against His innocence and to confound Him with seducers, they have been only some monsters whom the whole human race has held in horror, and whose names, too odious to every nature, have remained

buried in the same darkness from which their impiety came. In fact, what man had ever appeared with more incontestable characters of innocence and sanctity than Jesus the Son of the living God? In what man was ever observed so much love for virtue, so much sincere contempt for the world, so much charity for men, and such indifference for all human glory? Follow in detail His conduct and manners, and see if there has ever appeared on earth a just man more universally exempt from all the weaknesses which are inseparable from humanity. The more you observe Him, the more His sanctity shines out luminously. His disciples, who watch Him closely, are struck by the innocence of His life; while familiarity, which is so dangerous even to heroic virtue, serves only to discover, every day, new wonders in Him. When He speaks it is only the language of heaven, and He responds only when His answers may be useful for the salvation of those who interrogate Him. We never see in Him some intervals when the man asserts himself; but everywhere He appears as the envoy of the Most High. His most ordinary actions are exalted by the sublimity of the dispositions which accompany them; and never does He appear less a divine man than when He eats in the house of a Pharisee and when He calls Lazarus back from death to life. Jesus, therefore, is not and could not be a deceiver.

But was He demented? This supposition is such an absurdity that it is revolting; and in

presence of the sublimity of His doctrines, which have won the admiration of every age; in presence of the purity of His moral teaching, which could not be equalled in the most beautiful pages that ever came from the hands of man; in presence of that wisdom which marked all His works, which dictated all His responses, a wisdom which sanctified all His acts and confounded the perfidy of His enemies. No, Jesus was not demented. He was not guilty of a horrible falsehood. He said He was God, and therefore He is God.

O my adorable Master, I love to recognize Thee as the Messiah promised to Adam, as the Saviour of the world, and as the immortal King of ages. Thou art more than a great genius, more than Elias, more than a prophet, more than a divine man. Thou art the Son of the living God! Do not permit that anything in the world should ever disturb my faith or take from me Thy love.

PALM SUNDAY.

THE CENACLE.

PALM SUNDAY opens the great week, or, as it is called by excellence, the Holy Week. It is so . . . called because it is in this week the grandest mysteries of our holy religion are accomplished. You cannot better enter into the spirit of the Church than by meditating each day on one of the circumstances of the Passion of our blessed Lord. To-day let us enter the cenacle and consider the different circumstances associated with the institution of the most lovable and the most august of all the sacraments.

The first circumstance which presents itself to your meditations is the strange command which Jesus gives to His apostles, viz., to prepare a room which shall be at once large and beautifully appointed. In fact, it is a strange command, since it is the first time that the divine Master shows that He is particular in the choice of a place which He shall honor by His presence. For a palace, He chose a stable; for a cradle, He selected a manger; for a refuge of His infancy, He is content with the house of a poor artisan; to offer His last sacrifice, a wooden cross sufficed. It is only now that He does not wish to appear poor. He wishes to sur-

round His eucharistic body with honors; and why? These surroundings are intended more for us than for Him. He wishes to give us a lesson. He teaches us that we cannot surround the Blessed Eucharist with too much respect or magnificence. He justifies His Church from the reproach of too much pomp, which unthinking men would make against her, and who would wish to see her offer the holy sacrifice under a roof of straw and in vessels of wood and potter's clay, while they themselves walk on richest tapestry and eat and drink from gold and silver vessels. Ah, if gold and silver were ever legitimately employed, it is certainly when there is question of erecting a throne to the God of the Eucharist and to heighten the splendor of its festivals.

This has been the mind and conduct of all the saints, and of all who have with David loved the "beauty of God's house." They have all considered it a duty and a joy to contribute to the ornamentation of the place which He has chosen to make His dwelling among men. St. Cajetan wished that the churches and the altars should be decorated with all possible splendor, and, in spite of his love for poverty, he sought for the richest ornaments, saying that nothing was too precious for the Lord of the world. Are these your sentiments?

By this command Jesus warns us specially concerning the interior dispositions which we should bring to the reception of the Holy Eucharist. He asks that the room in which the institution of the Blessed Eucharist takes place should be grand and

vast and spacious. But that which constitutes the grandeur of the heart are the exalted sentiments and a complete detachment from earthly things. Our souls ascend or descend with the objects which preoccupy them. If the soul habitually loves and seeks after what is beneath her, the weight of these things compel her to descend. There is nothing so little or contracted as a soul whose intelligence revolves habitually in the narrow circle of purely material interests. The ideas are narrow, the tastes are low, and the mind is frivolous; grand and serious thoughts are too heavy for such a soul to carry. Do you wish to possess a grand and noble heart? Then banish from it every earthly affection. Jesus can be but ill at ease in a heart which is also occupied by creatures. The throne of your heart is by far too beautiful to allow some earthly idol to possess it; He only is worthy to occupy it who has formed it by His own hands, and then can enrich it by His grace from the treasury of His virtues. When approaching the holy table, offer to your King, Jesus, a heart void of all earthly affection or whatever is purely human.

If you would possess a truly great heart, let it be filled with a holy confidence. Confidence dilates the soul, unfolds all her faculties, and opens them to receive the dews of heavenly grace. It is precisely to facilitate this unfolding of the soul when approaching the holy table, that Jesus veils there His majesty under the eucharistic species, and invites us in words that are full of tenderness: "Come,

My well beloved, and eat the bread which I have prepared for you, and drink also of the wine; be inebriated by the delights of My table. Oh, with what ardor I have desired to eat of this pasch with you!" How then can you be wanting in confidence when Jesus calls you to Him with so much goodness?

Not only does Jesus wish a room vast and spacious, but also beautifully adorned. If your soul should be a dwelling-place worthy of God, she should be adorned with many virtues. This is a necessary condition for a worthy and fervent communion. And you know what these virtues should be: you should possess a lively faith, which shall present to you Jesus, true God and true man, under the sacred veils which hide Him from your corporal eyes—even as He was in the crib, when He received the adorations of the shepherds and the wise men; and even as He is in heaven, where He offers to His Father for you the wounds of His sacred humanity, the scars of which are still evident.

While approaching the holy table, let your soul be filled with an ardent charity. The Eucharist is by excellence the sacrament of love. Love begets love. When Jesus opens His heart for you with unspeakable tenderness, should you close yours to Him? What to Him are your protestations, your words of devotion, your sterile assurances? It is your heart that He desires, and it is your love He yearns for. He says to you, with an incomparable sweetness: "My son, give Me thy heart." I ask it

of thee, not as the world asks it, to fill it with trouble, agitation, and often remorse; but I ask it that I may bless it, purify it, and enrich it with My graces. "My son, give Me thy heart." What an enemy you shall be to yourself if you refuse to give it!

To a lively faith and an ardent charity add a profound humility. Alas, who are you to merit the distinguished honor which awaits you at the holy table? Moses, while thinking that he was only "dust and ashes," was astonished that God should hear him; St. Elizabeth, on seeing the Blessed Virgin, who had come to visit her, exclaimed: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my God should come to me?" The centurion acknowledged he was unworthy to receive Jesus in his house. But it is in your heart that Jesus is going to descend; He is about to unite Himself to you, and you to Him. Even were you an angel, you could not sufficiently merit such a favor. But oh! how far you are from being an angel!

These preparatory dispositions for communion are indicated to us by a circumstance in which Jesus gives us at once the example and the precepts. Before the mysterious repast at which the Blessed Eucharist was instituted, He put aside His garments, and, after having girded Himself as the servants do, He washed the feet of His apostles. What a lesson for us who are so jealous of our rank and dignity, so particular concerning precedence, and so desirous of honor! The God of heaven and earth is on His knees before His apostles, washing

their feet with those hands which can hurl the thunders, heal the sick, and lavish blessings. And Peter, at the sight of his Master's conduct, is seized with a holy indignation. "What! Lord, Thou wash my feet! I shall never permit Thee." Peter fully realized the dignity of his Master, says Bossuet, and he only wished to hinder Him because of the lowliness of the ministry which He performed; he did not understand that this was, for him, an indispensable preparation for the Holy Eucharist, and that he could not participate in it unless his body and his feet also were purified; that is to say, that the least stains, as well as the greatest faults, must be wiped away. But scarcely has Jesus declared to him that without this preparation he should have no part in His kingdom, than he exclaimed with greatest fervor: "Ah, Lord, wash not only my feet, but my hands and my head. Purify me wholly." From this let us learn with what purity we should approach the holy table. After having effaced our grievous faults, do not neglect those which are venial. You have been purified in the sacred waters of penance, but we have something yet to do. Besides those sins which kill the soul, there are others which disfigure it, and these also must be effaced. Then, before approaching the holy table, repeat with St. Peter: "Lord, my God, wash me, my feet, my head, my hands, that nothing in me shall be displeasing to Thy eyes, that I may be pure and without stain, to receive Thee into my heart, O God of purity!"

EASTER SUNDAY.

THE RESURRECTION.

THE Resurrection of Jesus from the tomb is the model of that new life which every Christian . . . should live who has returned to grace. Let us study the sacred characters of the Saviour's Resurrection, and learn on what conditions we also can arise with Him.

First Point.—The Resurrection of Jesus presents three principal characters; viz., it is true, it is all for God, and it is forever. Such should be the qualities of our return to God. Our return to God should be sincere. The Resurrection of Jesus is not a fiction, but a reality. The proofs of it are: His absence from the tomb; His winding-sheet and garments are left behind; and His apparition to Simon. Behold by what marks we may recognize if our resurrection to grace is sincere. Virtuous men and true Christians must be able to say of us what the angels said of Jesus, "He is not here." You may seek for this person in his old habits, in parties of pleasure, at the plays, and among the worldly; but he is no longer there. "Why do you seek a living soul among the dead?" Behold the pledges of his conversion—the winding-sheet and the relics of his worldliness. Hitherto vanity was evident in

his dress, but now modesty and decency are his most beautiful ornaments. This change should be apparent to every eye. Christians shall rejoice at this conversion, because it shall be their most beautiful eulogy. The worldly will laugh; so much the better—their railleries shall be our first atonement. The second character of the Resurrection of Jesus is that it is all for God. Before His death Jesus lived in the world, and He lived a human life. But once that He has arisen, He lives a life wholly celestial, He lives for God. His body even is spiritualized. It is on the heights of Galilee that His apostles must go to find Him. Behold our Model. “Even as Jesus has arisen,” says the apostle, “we must also arise to a new life.” He adds: “When I was a child, I thought as a child, I acted as a child; but having become a man, I have thought and acted as a man.” Let us apply these words to ourselves. When we were sinners, worldlings, slaves to our passions, we thought and acted as sinners and as worldlings; if we have truly become Christians, we should act and love and think as Christians.

According to the terms of the theology of St. Paul, there are in us two men—the old and the new. The old man is concupiscence, self, and pride. The new man is grace, Jesus, and faith. Now what is it to arise with Christ? It is to live His life. And what is it to live the life of Christ? To understand it well (for here is all the mystery and the foundation of Christian life), we must know that

life consists especially in two functions of the soul, viz., to think and to love. To live the life of Jesus, to live the life of faith, is to think of the world, of pleasures, of salvation, and of sufferings what Jesus thought of them; to live the life of Jesus is to love what He loved. But what has He loved? What has He thought of the pleasures of the world, of riches, and of sufferings? Think of His birth, His life and His death, think of His teachings, and then answer.

The third character of the Resurrection is its duration. Jesus once arisen dies no more. Never again shall we see Him assume His earthly garb or re-enter the tomb from which He came; never shall He become a victim to death, even for an instant. Hence St. Paul says: "Death has no longer empire over Him." And so our resurrection to grace should be constant. No one should behold us resuming our old guilty habits, or falling again into sin. We have arisen from our tomb, be careful not to re-enter it. St. Paul says: "Know that grace has crucified in us the old man, that the reign of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer." What a crime, if, after having returned to God, after having tasted the sweetness of His love, we should go, as the unclean animal, to our former sinfulness. Let us ask of our risen Saviour to keep us far from such a misfortune, and that He may bind us so strongly to Himself that we shall never be separated from Him.

Second Point.—The conditions to arise with Jesus.

The first condition is to die; in fact, only the dead can arise. Our soul cannot live at once the natural life which it has from the old Adam and the supernatural life which it must draw from the new Adam. These two lives are incompatible in their principles and in their effects. The principles of one are: nature, passions, pride, the senses; it has for its effects: pleasure, love of ease, and fear of sufferings. The principles of the supernatural life are: grace, faith, the promptings of the Holy Spirit; its effects are: humility, a spirit of sacrifice, and a love of suffering. We must, therefore, necessarily choose. Hence the maxim in the language of the Christian, so common and so true: "We must die to live." The vile insect which crawls under the grass does not become a beautiful butterfly except by leaving its first form and its first life. And so the Christian must arise from his ashes; he must cease to be a man and become a Christian. St. Paul says: "I die every day." This saying is full of consolation; it teaches us that spiritual death comes slowly; it is a daily work to be accomplished. Let us labor without relaxation, but let us labor without discouragement.

And here let us ask how this spiritual death happens. It comes only after the agony. There is no death without sorrow. Jesus replied to the disciples, who were frightened at the remembrance of His Passion: "It is necessary that Christ should suffer, and thus enter into His glory." It is the necessary condition. And this transformation which is made

in a Christian man is called mortification. "If any one wishes to come after Me"—that is to say, to live My life—"let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me." This is the daily "I die" of St. Paul. Mortification, then, is the path which leads to death, as death is the path which leads to resurrection. And then to suffer, or, rather, to wish to suffer. "If any one wishes to come after Me." Do you know why there are so few Christians truly worthy of the name? So few who live the life of faith? It is because there are so few who consent to suffer. What a strange thing! We wish to live the supernatural life, we wish to arise with Christ, but we do not wish mortification! We might just as well wish to die without suffering. Let us reform our erroneous ideas and walk after Jesus daily. He is laden with His cross, He ascends the hill of Calvary; He is crucified and He dies. We must also ascend the Calvary of humiliation, and embrace the cross, and allow ourselves to be crucified with Jesus to merit to arise as He did, to live with Him always.

QUASIMODO.

THE PEACE WHICH JESUS BRINGS TO THE WORLD.

THE first time that Jesus met His apostles after His resurrection He wished them peace, and . . . He repeated this salutation on several occasions. Let us to-day meditate on the nature and excellence of this peace which Jesus announced to His apostles, and which He has merited by His death—peace with God, peace with our neighbors, and peace with ourselves.

First Point.—Jesus has merited for us peace with God. This peace is the first and the most important matter. It is the fruit of justice, which is itself the fruit of the Saviour's merits. In what a terrible war sin has plunged man! What a fearful enemy it has raised against him! It is an angered God, pursuing man in His wrath, and preparing for him a terrible vengeance. Virtue, on the contrary, makes Him our most tender, our most faithful, and our most generous Friend. It is the Saviour Himself who tells us: "You shall be My friends, if you keep My commandments." And what can change this sweet union of the soul with her God? the soul that has, with her God, but a single wish or will; that receives from His hand prosperity with gratitude and adversity with resignation; that is honored

by His gifts in profusion; that refers to Him her glory and offers Him her humiliations; that in the midst of joy puts her delight in Him, and in the midst of sufferings rejoices at the thought of resembling Him and of pleasing Him? The friendship of God is the most solid as well as the most precious of all blessings; everything else shall pass away, this friendship only shall have no limit. It will survive ourselves, and after having been, in the journey of life, the support, the consolation, and the happiness of virtue, it shall become, in the heavenly city, her immense and eternal recompense. Strive, therefore, carefully to preserve peace with your God by avoiding sin, which can alone occasion the loss of His friendship.

Second Point.—Jesus has given us peace with our neighbor. St. James says: “Whence come wars and divisions amongst you? Are they not from your passions which war in your members?” Everything, in our corrupt nature, is a subject of contention: both the desire to acquire and the fear of losing, envy at another’s welfare and jealousy at what he possesses, the pleasures tasted at success and sorrow experienced at disappointment. The goods of earth cannot be possessed by all men, as they are too limited; still all strive for them, all dispute for them, all endeavor to seize them. There is only one good which is so vast that it may be possessed by the whole human race, which the world may enjoy without injury to any one, and which, far from being an object of contention, may be a

bond of union and sweetest concord. It is God! And what should change the harmony which should exist between a Christian and his brethren? He should wish nothing for himself which he would not equally desire for them; he should give much and ask nothing; he should never injure and always pardon. What hold can discord have on a soul of this character?

It is from the grace of Jesus, as well as from His examples, that the Christian soul draws the strength to make every sacrifice for peace with his brethren. What sacrifice shall he make when he beholds his Master and Model so generously sacrifice His honor and His reputation? What pardon can the soul refuse when she hears the sweet Victim of Calvary pardon His executioners, pray for them, and excuse them? These lessons and these examples were still fresh in the minds of the early Christians, and were so closely followed that the pagans, struck with admiration, exclaimed: "See how these Christians love one another!" Oh, blessed days of early Christianity! which have given to the world such a spectacle, when the whole society had but a single heart and a single soul! Would that this time would come again for us! Earth would become one peaceful sojourn, it would be the very image of heaven.

Third Point.—Jesus has given us peace with ourselves. This peace consists in a twofold submission, viz., the submission of the passions to reason, and reason to the divine law. Can tranquillity and

calm exist in a soul which is disturbed by anger, tormented by avarice, inflated by pride, torn by envy, or agitated by luxury? You might just as well seek for tranquillity in the burning volcano. Although we yield to passions, we can never expect peace from them. You may suppose that you can moderate them, and hope that your reason may keep them within limits where they shall be at once satisfied and ruled by permitting what is agreeable and refusing them what is hurtful. But this is pure delusion. Consult only your own experience. When has passion said, That is sufficient? Whenever has it failed to demand, and, when yielded to, did not demand more? You may easily turn aside a stream at its source, but once allow it to become a torrent and it shall overthrow every barrier you may oppose to its destructive ravages. And so it is with the passions; the more liberty they receive, the more difficult it becomes to arrest them. Reason is not strong enough to restrain their terrible bounds when they are unloosed; then it is that every effort must be employed to hinder them from unbridled excesses. There is no medium for passion: it must be strongly repressed, or it will take fullest flight; it must be subdued, or it will not obey; the soul must be sovereign master, or it will be the slave.

But where shall reason find arms sufficiently powerful to subdue such dangerous enemies which attack it with all their efforts and with all their seductions? Religion alone can give this strength

to reason. By her precepts she shows the means to tame the passions, and by her graces she gives those means. If your reason is perfectly submissive to the divine law, your passions will be in complete subjection to it; if you constantly do God's will, the passions shall constantly obey your will; when you obey God, they will obey you; and by submitting yourself to the sovereign Master you become master of yourself. That is to say, that you shall acquire the most beautiful empire that is given to man to exercise here on earth—the empire of himself! It is in this sense that we say: "To serve God is to reign." Always aspire to this spiritual royalty; it shall be your glory here below and it shall be your happiness in eternity.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

OUR divine Saviour, in the Gospel of to-day, presents Himself to us under the image of the . . . Good Shepherd. Oh, how pleasing is the picture and what confidence it inspires! Let us consider by what titles Jesus merits the character of Good Shepherd, and on what conditions you shall merit to be numbered among His faithful flock.

First Point.—The titles of Jesus to the character of Good Shepherd are: the excess of His love, the sacrifice of His life, and the sacrament of His body and blood. From all eternity we belonged to God, but by the prevarication of our first father we were drawn into his misfortune, and we fell into the hands of the demon. The Eternal Word, touched by compassion for His fold, which was exposed to the ravages of the infernal wolf, left the sojourn of His glory and came on earth to deliver us. Is it necessary to repeat here all that He has done for us? The memory of His fatigues and His labors is still fresh in our hearts. If He has gone through Judea so often, it was to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. If He was seated at the well of Jacob, it was to save the poor sheep of Samaria. If He associated twelve apostles, it was to go through

all Judea, to bring together His dispersed flock. It was the desire to save Magdalen that prompted Him to go to the house of Simon the Pharisee. It was this same desire which led Him to the house of Zacheus, the publican. Now, that which He did during His mortal life He still does, although seated at the right hand of His Father. By His grace, by His priests, by the events which multiply his solicitude, He does not cease to conjure and urge sinners to return to His sheepfold. His excessive love justifies, therefore, the title of Good Shepherd which is given to our divine Saviour; but the sacrifice of His life justifies it still more.

Jesus Himself has said, "The good shepherd gives his life for his flock." It was necessary for Him to die in order to snatch us from the power of the demon, and shall He hesitate? Shall He permit His flock to perish, in order that He may save His own life? Have no fear of this. Even if hell shall suggest the most cruel torments, and the Jews condemn Him to a frightful suffering and a shameful death, even if His Father shall seem to abandon Him, and pour out His anger on Him, He shall resign Himself to all this and shall make every sacrifice. The soldiers wish to bind Him and He extends His hands; Pilate commands Him to be beaten by scourges, and He yields His body until He falls from exhaustion; He is condemned to die, and He willingly walks to the place of immolation, carrying on His wounded shoulders the instrument of His punishment. The executioners command

Him to lie down on the cross, and He at once obeys. Behold My body, crucify it! Behold My veins, draw from them every drop of My blood! "The good shepherd gives his life for his flock." O Jesus, how well Thou hast merited the title of Good Shepherd! how well Thou hast fulfilled the obligations of that office! Do not permit that so much suffering should be endured in vain for me.

But it is not enough that Jesus died for us. His ingenious love has done more: it has found the secret of surviving death and eternalizing His presence and His benefits among us. Ordinary shepherds lead their flocks into rich pastures, that they may find there the most abundant food. But Jesus has left to His flock His own flesh and blood which must serve them for food and nourishment. Not content with having died for our salvation, He wishes to unite Himself to us in such a manner that He shall be one with us, His blood shall flow in our veins, His flesh shall become our flesh, and His Sacred Heart shall beat near to our own. Where shall we ever find a love at all comparable to this? Oh, then, let us strive to be grateful! Jesus calls us, His love urges us. Let us approach Him with confidence, and approach the holy table often. The greatest injury we can do Him is to despise His blessings. He awaits us to give us strength and life, and should we remain far from Him we shall condemn ourselves to weakness and to death.

Second Point.—Among the characteristics which distinguish the faithful flock Jesus Himself des-

ignates three. They are: to know, to hear, and to follow the Good Shepherd. To know Jesus is all the Christian; it is the happiness of the present and the future life. The Saviour of the world has said: "O Father, eternal life consists in knowing Thee, and in knowing Him whom Thou hast sent." But who knows Jesus? Do you know Him? Have you that intelligent and reasonable knowledge of His religion and its mysteries which give to faith such solidity that it is proof against bad examples and impious words? Have you that practical knowledge of Jesus which studies His desires and conforms to them? Do you know His thoughts, that you may adopt them; His maxims, that you may follow them; or His precepts, that you may observe them? Have you that filial knowledge of Jesus which produces love, which is penetrated by a holy respect in His presence, by profound gratitude at the remembrance of His blessings, by sincere regret at the sins which have displeased Him, and by the firm resolution of sinning no more? You say you know Jesus, but do you know that He is the source of all beauty, of all amiability, of all perfection, and is, consequently, the most worthy object of your love? And if you do know Him, then why do you love Him so little?

The second character of the faithful flock is to hear the voice of Jesus. God communicates Himself to us and speaks to us in three ways, viz.: by the Holy Scriptures, by His Church, and by conscience. Now, are you docile to this triple voice,

by which the Good Shepherd speaks to your soul? Do you know that the Holy Scriptures contain our mysteries and the rules of our conduct? Do you respect them as the word of God?

The voice of the Church is also the voice of Jesus. "He that hears you hears Me, and he that despises you despises Me." The priests of God's Church are the interpreters of Jesus, and it is in His name they speak to you, exhort you, and instruct you. How do you hear them? What is your esteem for the holy word?

Jesus speaks to you also by the voice of conscience. It is through your conscience that He shows you the good you should do and the evil you should avoid. What fruit do you draw from these teachings? When conscience tells you to cease frequenting such society, not to read such a book, and to abstain from such an action, do you hear it?

Third Point.—The good sheep follow the good shepherd, and they follow no other. Do you follow Jesus in the way He has traced for you? He has suffered by His cross, by tribulations, by humiliations. Without doubt, had there been an easier way to heaven, He would have followed it. But the broad way, sown with flowers, is the way which conducts to perdition. Enter, therefore, willingly, after your divine Master, in the narrow and difficult way; this conducts surely to life eternal. Ask of Him the strength to walk in it with constancy, and that you may never depart from it.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON AFFLICTIONS.

OUR blessed Saviour has announced to His apostles, in the Gospel of to-day, that their destiny . . . on this earth is to endure afflictions, but that these afflictions shall be changed into joy. We shall therefore consider the conditions required that the afflictions of the Christian shall become for him a subject of joy.

First Point.—The first condition required to change our sufferings to joy is to suffer for the faith. Even as Jesus must attain to glory and triumph by sufferings and humiliations, so also it was in the designs of God that the Church could not be established, nor could she be developed, except by persecutions. If the great ones of the earth had extended to the Church their powerful assistance, we might believe that her establishment on earth was a work purely human, and her existence was accounted for in the ordinary way; but by refusing all human aid, in founding His religion in spite of armed opposition and the ever active human powers, God has clearly declared that religion owed her origin and development to Him.

And it is precisely to show that she owes to Him her preservation, also, that God still permits, and

shall permit to the end of time, His religion to be the object of attack from heresy, incredulity, and all the passions. If, therefore, you wish to be a Christian, if you wish especially to practise your duties, you must expect persecutions from the world. True, indeed, you have no need to fear persecution from the sword; the modern methods on which our civilization prides itself seem to shield us from this danger. However, if God preserved you from these fearful trials, if Satan should rouse again among you the persecutions which disturbed the first days of the Church, then recall the virtues which triumphed over them. Children of the martyrs, imitate the courage of your fathers, and dare as they did to resist even to blood; do not hesitate to follow them even that far, and prefer a glorious death to a life dishonored by apostasy.

Second Point.—A second condition required to change our sufferings into joy is that they should be the consequence of our fidelity in the service of God. In addition to the violent persecution to which Christianity is sometimes exposed, the Christian is liable to particular tribulations, less terrifying, unquestionably, but more difficult to endure, perhaps, by reason of their continuance. Besides, the world in which you live pursues you with its contradictions, its railleries, and its seductions. You must resist inclinations which attack you from within and passions which lead you away. The edifice of salvation is not erected as were the ramparts of Jerusalem, by employing one hand to con-

struct and the other to defend them. If you have entered upon the ways of justice, you have already traversed a part of the narrow and painful pathway which conducts to heaven; but do not stop in your laborious career, and, after having surmounted the greatest obstacles, do not allow yourself to be cast down by the difficulties which yet remain to be overcome. On the contrary, at the sight of new difficulties take courage, for these are the very obstacles in your way which shall win the recompense. Every effort shall merit a new reward for you, and every victory shall add another jewel to the crown which is prepared for you.

But if you have hitherto walked in the ways of iniquity, your return to God will meet with special obstacles in your inveterate habits, in your passions, strengthened by long service in sin. Still, be not cast down. The difficulties you shall meet with shall be the most meritorious part of your penance. The more that the practice of virtues opposed to your vices shall cost the greater shall be the benedictions which you shall receive. If the sight of the barriers which obstruct the path of penance for you shall frighten you, then lift up your eyes to the hand which guides you and which shall help you to surmount them. The most difficult step is the first, and in proportion as you advance you shall feel the pathway grow smooth under your feet.

Third Point.—The third condition required to change your sufferings into joy is to suffer in a

spirit of faith. When affliction falls on you, think that it is God who sends it to you, and that you must receive it with submission. Reflect that it is a law of our nature, then you shall accept it in patience; that it is the punishment of sin, and you shall receive it with resignation; that it is a chastisement, and then you shall accept it with gratitude; that it is a trial to which Providence subjects you and you shall accept it with courage; that it is the crucible in which Divine Goodness purifies you to make you more worthy, then you shall accept it with joy.

Jesus has spoken this word, which has ever been a subject of astonishment for the worldly and a consolation for the Christian: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." When, therefore, afflictions fall on you, think that you have one consolation—they come from God. Go then, not to your worldly friends—you would but weary them without any profit to yourself—but go to your divine Consoler; present Him your tears, and He will wipe them away; present Him your sorrows, and He shall sweeten them and give to you the sure hope that every sorrow you experience shall be compensated by His graces.

Fourth Point.—The fourth condition required to change sufferings into joy is voluntarily to accept them as an expiation for your past offences. We cannot hope to enter heaven except by the pathway which our divine Saviour Himself has trod. It is He who has declared this truth to us, that we

must carry the cross. He has wished to suffer, the apostle tells us, in order to be not only our Redeemer but our Model. Think of all the saints who have gone before you on earth and who have preceded you in the blessed country, and you shall not find a single one who has been exalted except after a life of mortification. All have attained to glory through humiliations, to the supreme good by self-abnegation, to happiness by sufferings: Look about, on every side, and you will not find another way. Ask from heaven some precepts and ask from earth some examples, but they shall have none others to give you. Mortification of the body, by retrenching its pleasures, of the soul, by a subjugation of the passions, are the true means, the absolutely necessary means of sanctification; and, unhappily, we must add, the means but little known among men and rarely put in practice. Nothing is more common, even among those who believe themselves faithful, than a soft and sensual life, which is so opposed to the maxims and precepts and example of Jesus Christ. Because there are few mortifications especially commanded us, there are those who believe that mortification is commanded only in some general manner, and even the few practices of self-denial which the laws of the Church make binding on us are not observed. We are wont to moderate them rather than to observe them. The secret of this so-called Christian conduct appears to be to conciliate the commands of God with the pleasures and dissipa-

tions of the world: and we strive to content ourselves in the belief that we have conformed to the precepts when, although not violating them openly, we have had the unhappy facility of evading them. Never do this, but regard the law of penance not as a burden, but as a blessing, since its observance shall secure for you your best and most sacred interests.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

OUR LOVE FOR JESUS.

THE affliction which the apostles experienced at the departure of their Master proves that . . . they loved Him with a love which was too human. Our blessed Saviour reproached them for this, kindly, however, and at the same time He affords us an occasion to examine the nature of the love which we have for Him. Father Lacordaire says that "nothing is more simple than love, and still it contains three acts in the unity of its movement, viz., preference, devotion, and unity."

First Point.—"Man, however vast his heart may be, cannot attach himself to everything with the same ardor. Surrounded by objects which, in different degrees, have the impress of beauty, he shall find shades of difference in the attractions which hold him. Very often we cannot give a reason for our preference; but what is certain is that we have our preferences and that love begins in us at the first moment the selection of the object is made." At the moment when we make our entrance into the life of affections we naturally love those whose age or studies or position are similar to our own; and still our heart has already made its preferences. Almost without knowing it, a choice is quickly made

of one who shall be for us more than fellow-student; he shall be our friend, the confidant of our sorrows and our joys, our fears and our hopes; his memory shall not be effaced, but shall remain with us during our whole life.

Later, on our entrance into the world, a thousand objects armed with all the attractions which seduce and captivate come to knock at the door of our heart and to ask for our preference. Jesus, on His part, with His cross in one hand and His Gospel in the other, calls us by the voice of conscience, and by the voice of His priests, by all that He has done for us, and by His titles to our love and gratitude. We must make our choice. On this choice our earthly future depends and also our eternal destiny. If the heart of man always inclines towards the most worthy object of its choice, our preference shall not be doubtful. What being is more lovable than the Saviour? But, unfortunately, instead of permitting ourselves to be guided by reason and by faith, we allow ourselves to be influenced by the passions, and we choose blindly. Shall you be fortunate enough to be proof against such sad influence?

Second Point.—"But love is not satisfied by the mere act of choice, it demands devotion from the one chosen. To choose is to prefer one before all others; but to be devoted is to prefer the object of devotion even to yourself. Devotion is immolation of self to the object loved, and whoever does not go thus far does not love. We find this condition in

all the affections in which virtue mingles the divine balm of her presence. It is that which inspires the mother, bending day and night over the cradle of her child; it is that which fills the heart of the soldier and prompts him to face death boldly for his country; it is that which strengthens the martyr against the threats of tyrants and gives him greatest solace in all his punishments. These are the traits of love which the world, all corrupted as it is, recognizes and admires. And if love has not had at all times an opportunity to manifest itself by noblest sacrifices, it constantly shows, however, by lesser sacrifices that it carries within it the germs which make it as strong as death, as the Sacred Scriptures attest" (Père Lacordaire).

Is it thus that you have loved Jesus? After having chosen you to make you His child of predilection, He has recalled you to His admirable light. He has devoted Himself to you, and as a proof of it He vowed Himself to death, and to an ignominy more frightful than death, to redeem your soul and to open heaven for you. Hence St. Paul says: "Jesus has loved me, He has delivered Himself up for me." And thus it is that all the saints have loved, by responding to His devotion with their own devotion. Listen to St. Paul: "What shall separate us from the charity of Christ? Shall it be tribulation, sufferings, hunger, or thirst? Shall it be danger, persecution, or the sword? But we are stronger than all these fears, for the sake of Him who has loved us. Yes, I am certain that neither

life nor death, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, neither strength, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, can separate us from the charity of God, which is in Christ Our Lord." Behold what St. Paul thought and spoke, and what all the saints thought and spoke as well as he. Can you hurl the same defiance to every creature? Consult your own heart, and then answer.

Third Point.—"There still remains the third act which crowns the marvellous drama, and in which our soul is at once the theatre and the actress. After we have chosen the object of our preference, and after we have given ourselves in fullest devotion, there still remains something to be done" (Père Lacordaire).

Union is necessary. This is the end and the limit of love in the heart of God and in the heart of the Christian. Not content with having chosen us as His well-beloved creature, with having given us grace, life, heaven, and happiness by the complete sacrifice of Himself, Jesus has wished to unite Himself to us in the closest manner. And what has He done to accomplish this? O marvellous love of a God for His creature! He began by uniting Himself to our miserable nature; He became man, as one of us; He lived our life; He has wished to dwell with us, and to find His delights in remaining with us. But this sojourn was necessarily transitory; this union of the Word in the Incarnation was His union with human nature in general. The

heart of Jesus wished more, and He has done more. He has instituted the Holy Eucharist, and thereby has found the secret of eternalizing His presence among men, whom He has loved so much. He has wished to give Himself and to unite Himself to each one in particular. What love! Can you ever be sufficiently grateful?

If you love Jesus truly, it is not enough to have chosen Him for your Friend and your King; it is not enough to be prepared for entire devotion and even to immolate yourself for Him. You should earnestly aspire to be united to Him. This union, the object of delight to the heart that loves, consists in the complete fusion of your heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by the same thoughts, the same desires, and the same wishes. You should regard the things of the world—its pleasures, its honors—as He regarded them. It is necessary that you should love and desire what He has desired and loved. What union could ever exist between two hearts whose sentiments and affections were quite contrary? But because it is in the Holy Eucharist that the union with Jesus is closest and most intimate, it is necessary that you should be most anxious to be nourished by it. Indifference for this sacrament would testify your want of love. How, can you think that you love Jesus, when you have so little desire to be united to Him?

Adorable Master, Thou hast chosen me for Thy child when I was so unworthy; Thou hast devoted Thyself to my salvation in spite of the abuse I have

made of Thy grace. Thou desirest to be united to me, to lift me up to Thee. I wish also to take Thee for my only inheritance, to sacrifice myself for Thee, and to remain faithful to Thee; and, by uniting myself often with Thee in the sacrament of Thy love, may I merit to be eternally united with Thee in the Kingdom of Thy glory.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON PRAYER.

THE reproach which Jesus makes to His disciples, in the Gospel of to-day, for not having prayed . . . in His name, must reveal to us the reason that the prayers of so many Christians, and yours in particular, are fruitless. The reason is, they do not pray, and you do not pray, in the name of Jesus. Strive, therefore, to understand how you should pray, and to pray in the name of the adorable Master.

First Point.—To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray in virtue of His merits and in union with Him. We are, after all, only sinful men, and we only merit the anger of Heaven; so that when God deigns to hear us it is not through any merit of ours, but it is solely in consideration of Jesus His Son. He is the powerful Mediator between God and man, He is the eternal Intercessor before His Father, He constantly offers our prayers to Him, and thus secures for them a favorable acceptance. Nothing is agreeable to God except what comes to Him through His divine Son. When our prayers are presented by Him, when they are united and, as it were, incorporated with His, they then become, in a manner, divine prayers. It is not we, properly

speaking, whom God hears, but Jesus who prays for us and with us, and hence the efficacy of prayer offered in His name. God, who owes us nothing, can refuse nothing to His Son.

And so at every instant the benefits of redemption are applied to each of our actions. Jesus on earth was our Redeemer; in heaven He is our Intercessor, and, on His heavenly throne He consummates the grand work which He began on the cross. He has not ceased to shed His blood for us, except to offer it continually in our behalf. This teaching, which is at once consoling and encouraging, shows us our blessed Saviour standing between His Father and us; in one hand He offers Him our prayers and in the other He brings us His graces. He is all-powerful before God because of His merits, and over our hearts, to make us acquire them. The apostles did not yet know this consoling dogma of the mediatorship of Jesus. Hitherto they had prayed, as all the other Jews had prayed, in their faith in the Messias. By commanding them to pray, henceforth, in His name, the divine Master began to reveal to them His character of Mediator. But you, who know this truth so well, approach your heavenly Father; clothed by the merits of your Saviour, pray in His name, being fully assured that you shall be heard. The promise of Jesus is most formal: "Everything that you shall ask the Father in My name shall be given you."

Second Point.—To pray in the name of Jesus is to ask what He wishes we should ask. As there are

two kinds of goods, spiritual and temporal, there are also two kinds of legitimate objects which we may request, but the rules of prayer are not the same for both. Certainly we are not forbidden to ask God for temporal goods. In the prayer which Jesus Himself has dictated to us He makes us ask for our daily bread, and the Church, enlightened by His spirit, implores fruitfulness for the earth, regularity of the seasons, the health of the atmosphere, the prosperity of States, and universal peace. Let us also ask, with her, all these blessings, but let us ask them as she does. We should observe in our prayers the order the Church follows and the end she proposes.

The order which the Church follows is according to the precept of her divine Founder. She begins her prayer by asking for the kingdom of God and His justice; her petitions for earthly things are only secondary.

The end which the Church proposes in her prayers. She does not ask the goods of the present life, except in so far as they may be conducive to salvation. These are the only prayers in the temporal order which may be made in the name of Jesus. The mission of our divine Saviour, His labors, His sufferings, and His pains were only for our sanctification. It would, then, be a gross error to think of applying to objects which are foreign to salvation those merits of Jesus which have only our salvation for their object and aim.

As for prayers in the spiritual order, they can

be general or particular. We may ask in general for our salvation and the graces which shall be conducive for it, or we may solicit a special and distinct grace. The first kind of prayer is at all times and under every circumstance assured of its effect. The promise of Jesus applies to it in all its extent and without restriction or reserve of any kind. God wishes our salvation as much and more than we do; so that when we ask of Him, in the name of Jesus, that which enables us to gain our salvation we are certain to obtain it. Sometimes the request of a special grace, as the conversion of a parent, the reformation of a defect, is not heard; it is because God knows best what is advantageous for us. That which we desire as our greatest good may be perhaps opposed to a greater good, of which we are ignorant, or may be prejudicial to us in a way we do not perceive. Again, it is the infinite goodness of God which refuses us. In vain did the great St. Paul ask of God three times to be delivered from the angel of Satan, who tormented him. This trial was useful for him, since the magnificent revelations with which he was favored were not occasions of pride and destruction for him. God Himself assured him that His grace was sufficient, and that his virtue should be perfected by temptations.

Third Point.—To pray in the name of Jesus is to ask as He wishes us to ask, viz., with purity of heart, humility, confidence, perseverance, and attention.

Prayer should come from a heart which is pure

and exempt from sin. The sinner has lost all the rights which the merits of Jesus had acquired for him to the grace of salvation. One prayer only can serve him, and it is the prayer of penance; there remains but one grace to implore, and that is pardon. Every other shall be useless for him and shall be refused. If, then, you have had the misfortune to sin, beg before everything, by your most ardent supplications, the grace of your pardon, and that only shall render you worthy to receive other graces.

The second condition of prayer is humility. "The prayer of the humble man shall penetrate the clouds." The impious Achab at last humbled himself before God, and by this act alone he obtained that the thunders of the heavenly anger, already suspended above his head, should be turned away. Is it possible for us to have an idea of prayer and be ignorant of this fundamental rule? Why, arrogance in prayer is not only a vice—it is contradiction, it is a madness! Would some great one of the earth receive a request which should be asked with pride? The very need which leads us to the feet of the King of kings should make us also feel our dependence on Him.

Confidence is the third condition of prayer. A man would feel injured if you should doubt his word. Your doubts are then an outrage against God. And of what are you uncertain? Is it of His fidelity, or is it of His power? Put no limit to your hopes; He has placed none to His engagements.

You will never please Him by reserved or timid requests. Fearlessly ask the most excellent gifts. If it is a virtue you need, ask that it be perfect; if it is a victory, ask that it may be complete; if it is the pardon of your sins, then ask for the entire remission of them. Divine munificence is the contrary of human liberality: the more you ask, the more you have a right to obtain.

The fourth quality of prayer is perseverance. Jesus promises that prayer made in His name shall be heard, but He has not designated the time. He engages Himself to grant every request, but not as soon as you have formulated your demands. Often, on the contrary, He seems not to hear you, but this is precisely to test your faith, your patience, your humility, and your fervor. And, after all, are not the graces of God sufficiently precious and worthy of being asked for long and often?

Attention is the fifth condition of prayer. Without attention there can be no prayer. The most necessary act of religion cannot be a purely exterior practice. Can we, in good faith, persuade ourselves that we love God, and implore Him, and return Him thanks, and yet without thinking of Him? That which essentially constitutes prayer, the prayer which God hears, is not a mere sound which comes from the mouth and is lost in the air, but it is the sentiment of the heart which arises to Him. Let us reflect on these different conditions of prayer, and see if we have hitherto prayed in the name of Jesus.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE HOLY GHOST.

TO appreciate fully how great is the love which Jesus manifests for us in promising us the . . . Holy Ghost, it is necessary to know what is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful.

First Point.—The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Our divine Saviour attributes to Him three principal functions. He is the Consoler, and the Church calls Him “the best Consoler.” Never has any one merited this title more than He. There is not among men a single one who has not fallen into misfortune. Where shall man turn for consolation? His very friends fly from him, even as the birds of passage depart at the approach of winter. If some should strive to console him, they can only exhort him to patience and speak of the necessity of suffering. This necessity is incontestible, without doubt, but it is truly disheartening when suffering is separated from religion; for then sufferings have neither principle, nor end, nor recompense. But, on the contrary, we find greatest consolation in suffering when it is viewed in the light of the Holy Spirit. And how does this happen? Because the Holy Spirit reveals to the unfor-

fortunate sufferers that the true cause of sorrow is in the sins which have been committed; because He makes sufferings glorious, since they give to him who suffers a trait of resemblance to Jesus; because sufferings may become a means of expiation for sin and, consequently, a means of attaining the happiness of heaven. It is the special office of the Holy Spirit to accord us these sublime consolations, and He only has the power to make us taste them.

The Holy Spirit is called by Jesus the Spirit of Truth. He merits this title because it is He who is the Author of all truth; it is He who propagates and spreads it; it is He who convinces the intelligence of man and makes him receive it. The law of Moses clearly pointed out the duty, but it did not afford strength to put this duty in practice. The world proclaims the eulogy of virtue, but this sterile admiration gives no aid to the heart, which is left to its own weakness. It belongs to the Holy Spirit only to reveal to us all truth, and to render it lovable and easy for us. See the apostles; think of their ignorance with regard to the mystery of the cross. It was for them an "unintelligible word," but hardly had they received the Holy Spirit than they understood the happiness of sufferings. They considered themselves happy to have endured ignominy for the name of Jesus. Had not Jesus already said: "Blessed are they who suffer persecutions for justice's sake"? These were new sentiments, which had hitherto been unknown. This truth was too deep for the apostles—"You cannot bear it now." The

Holy Spirit was necessary. It was His mission to enlighten their intelligence, and to make them taste the maxims which take away all the repugnances of nature.

The same ignorance still exists. Carnal minds revolt at the obscurity of our mysteries; sinners do not see the abyss open at their feet; even many pious people do not understand Christian life. They all need the light of the Holy Spirit. If you wish to receive Him, correct in yourself every disposition which would render you unworthy of His holy communications.

The Holy Spirit must give testimony to Jesus. He gives this testimony in a most splendid manner, in manifesting His divinity by countless prodigies. On the very day when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles they were transformed into other men. St. Peter preached his Master and his God before multitudes of different peoples whom the solemnity of the day had assembled at Jerusalem, and all heard him speak in their own native tongue. The most splendid miracles attest the divine mission of the apostles and the divinity of Him who sent them. These poor fishermen, without the study of human sciences, without credit, without the art of eloquence, undertook the conversion of the world; and in spite of prejudices and persecutions, in spite of obstacles humanly insurmountable, the greatest success crowned their efforts. Legions of virgins triumphed over the corruption of the pagan world by their purity; millions of

martyrs died in testimony of the divinity of the Christian faith. In spite of all the efforts of the mighty ones, all the resources of genius, all the artifices of sophistry, all the revolts of passion, the Church was established and developed, and continued her triumphant march along the ages. Behold how the Holy Spirit has rendered, and still renders, testimony to Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

Second Point.—The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the faithful. He exercises three principal functions in us: He brings us forth to Christian life, He sanctifies us, and He gives us the pledge of our divine affiliation. He brings us forth to Christian life. At the beginning, God the Father called the world from nothingness; on the cross, the Incarnate Word reformed man by His blood; in the Church, the Holy Spirit creates this supernatural life, which absorbs in the Christian all that there is there of the old Adam, even to his name of man, and makes of him a creature wholly new. The Church proclaims these admirable effects of the Holy Spirit by her enthusiastic chants: "Come, Spirit Creator—send Thy Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth." But where is this new creation wrought? At first in Baptism, and then, if we should lose this precious life, in the Sacrament of Penance, when the Holy Spirit returns it to us by His grace.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us. He is the love which unites the Father and the Son; He personi-

fies, in a manner, the love of God for us. He it is who is the Source of all graces, or, rather, He is grace itself. In the same manner as the just man who rejoices in grace is the living temple of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit dwells in him as a lovable guest—*dulcis hospes animæ*. It is from Him good inspirations come which prompt us to good works, and those holy inspirations which keep us from evil. It is His strength which sustains us in combats, and His light which removes our doubts. It is His charity which encourages the Christian to practise the most heroic virtues, and it is by Him that the just attain the most sublime perfection. The sanctification of man is attributed to the Holy Spirit particularly, as the creation is attributed to the Father, and the redemption to the Son. And thus it is that the august Trinity is wholly engaged in procuring our happiness.

The Holy Spirit gives us a pledge of our divine affiliation. This is the very teaching of St. Paul. Listen to his admirable words, and then you can comprehend the nobility which your vocation to the faith gives you. He writes to the faithful at Ephesus: "You have been marked by the Holy Spirit, who is the seal of the promise and the pledge of the heavenly inheritance. Never forget that you are the temples of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you" (Acts). And read what he writes to the Romans: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, My

Father. For the Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." And if we are sons, we are also heirs, yes, heirs of God and co-heirs of Jesus. See, therefore, what magnificent destinies await us. Pray to the Holy Spirit that He may render you worthy, not only to see Him, but to realize Him fully.

THE ASCENSION.

ON THE MYSTERY.

FORTY days after His resurrection, Jesus gathered His disciples together. St. Paul assures us . . . that they numbered fully five hundred. Then Jesus led them to the mountain of Olives, and after blessing them He disappeared from them, rising majestically to heaven. If we seek to know why Jesus returned to Heaven, we shall find He returned for Himself and for us.

First Point.—It is for Himself and for His own glory that Jesus triumphantly ascended to heaven. Bossuet says: “As a prince who has on hand a great war against a foreign nation quits his kingdom for a time to go forth and combat his enemies in their own country, and when the expedition shall have ended he shall return with superb display into the capital city of his own country, his followers and his chariots adorned by the spoils from the conquered people; so the Son of God, our King, wishing to overthrow the reign of the demon who by an insolent usurpation was boldly declared the prince of the world, has Himself descended from heaven to earth to conquer this irreconcilable enemy. Having deposed him from his throne by arms of the weakest kind were they in other hands than His,

there was nothing else to do than to return triumphantly to heaven, which is the place of His origin and the principal seat of His royalty." It is, then, Jesus marching royally to the throne of His glory whom you are now considering. What a grand and magnificent spectacle! How different He is on this day, the high and powerful Lord, from what you have hitherto seen Him? His departure from the earth is very different from His entrance into the world. Then He manifested Himself in His infirmity; He was little; He was born as the children of men are born; He, the King of heaven and earth, descended into a stable. We see Him weak, and His mother Mary carrying Him in her arms; He was subject to the needs of our body, and experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue, and sufferings. He was a man—not the *primitive* man, ruling the earth, happy, immortal; but, apart from sin, a man like to fallen man: that is to say, a man of sorrows, despised, beaten, outraged; a mortal man obliged to submit to an ignominious death, the death of the cross. Many of those who saw Him in that degradation did not know Him. Jerusalem remained indifferent when the Wise Men came to speak to Him; Samaria closed her gates against Him; Nazareth wished to cast Him from the high hills on which she was built, and the doctors of the law laughed at Him when He answered them. The Pharisees calumniated Him, the synagogues expelled Him, and the whole people cried out, "Crucify Him!" But to-day Jesus avenges His

sacred humanity on all their degradations, all their outrages, and He manifests Himself glorious and triumphant in the eyes of the whole universe.

The cross of Jesus has ceased to be a scandal for the Jews. They wished for a glorious Messias. Is He, then, without glory—He who conquered death, and, having accomplished His mission on earth, returns to heaven in magnificence? He is more splendid than Solomon in all his glory, stronger than David in battles, more beautiful than Absalom in the flower of his youth, more holy than Enoch and Elias, who were taken up from earth. His body, which had been placed and sealed in a sepulchre, had undergone a glorious transformation; His face shone as the sun; His vestments were white as snow; His reed sceptre is changed to a sceptre of command; His crown of thorns is replaced by an aureola of light; at His feet are His disciples, and above His head legions of angels are descending: the earth is silent before Him, and the elements await His command; a docile cloud lowers about His feet, and He ascends—ascends into the heavens, leaving Judea, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary, and to take in exchange possession of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of Sion, the kingdom of His Father! Arise, then, Lord, above the heavens, and let Thy glory shine throughout the whole earth. As for me, Lord Jesus, my King and my Master, I am proud of my name of Christian; on this day, especially, when Thou coverest all the

humiliations of man with the strength and the omnipotence of God.

Second Point.—Jesus returns to heaven in our interest. It is, first, to prepare a place for us. The gates of heaven had been closed by the sin of Adam and no one could enter there, before the divine Mediator. Even the just of the Old Law, the Abels, the Abrahams, and the Jacobs, these men so famous in our sacred books for the splendor of their virtues and their lively faith, awaited in Limbo for the day of their deliverance; and it is to-day that they enter heaven with Jesus. Henceforth the gates of the Holy City are open to us: let immortal thanks be given to our blessed Saviour! He has marked out the way for us by His lessons, by His precepts, and by His examples while He lived on earth; to-day He has thrown the gates wide open for us. He is there our Precursor. From His sojourn of glory, He extends His hands to us and calls us to Him. He said to His apostles: "I go to prepare a place for you." But this place shall not be for us, except we merit it.

Jesus ascends to heaven, and there occupies a throne at the right hand of His Father, to serve us as Advocate and Intercessor before God. And so He quits the earth, but does not abandon us. In the sojourn of His glory He loves us still, and His blood pleads for us. As the always-living Mediator, He intercedes in our behalf. It is through Him we have access to the heavenly Father. By His prayers

He gives to our prayers a value; by His thanksgiving, our gratitude is acceptable; by His oblations, our sacrifices are made worthy; by His sorrows, our penance is valuable; by His sufferings, our mortifications are efficacious; and by His expiations, our satisfaction is complete. It is in union with His merits that our feeble works become meritorious. The eternal Mediator between God and man continues in heaven the ministry which He exercised on the cross. It is He who has prompted St. John to say: "Be consoled, my children, and do not despair; if you have sinned, remember that you have in heaven an Advocate, who is all-powerful and who shall plead your cause before God."

Jesus has ascended to heaven to send us the Holy Ghost, whose mission it shall be to complete the work of redemption. The effusion of the Holy Spirit on earth, His visible descent on the apostles, are the recompense of the Passion of Jesus on the cross. He could not be given, therefore, until the Sovereign Priest had consummated His sacrifice in heaven. "For as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet given" (John vii.). Moreover, Jesus had formally declared that, "if I do not go, the Holy Spirit shall not come, but if I go, I shall send Him to you."

O my amiable Master, since Thy entrance into heaven must have such precious results, then quit this earth: enter heaven to fulfil there the ministry

of Mediator; appease divine justice, which I have so often angered by my crimes, and grant me the grace of imitating Thee on earth, that I may possess Thee and contemplate Thee eternally in heaven.

PENTECOST.

ON THE MYSTERY.

TO-DAY the Church commemorates the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles. There can . . . be nothing more interesting for us to know than the dispositions which are required to receive Him and the effects which He produces in those who receive Him.

First Point.—Dispositions required to receive the Holy Spirit. The first is recollection. The Holy Spirit Himself tells us that He leads into solitude the soul with whom He wishes to speak. God cannot communicate Himself to a disturbed or agitated soul. The apostles were in retreat when the Holy Spirit descended upon them. And hence we conclude that everything which disturbs the soul pre-occupies the heart, and consequently is an obstacle to the communications of the Holy Spirit and to the support and strength of the Christian life. The reading of romances, the frequentation of worldly assemblies, a love for plays are, therefore, incompatible with a spirit of piety. And it is for this reason that Jesus in His Gospel condemns all these diversions. The world is astounded at this reprobation, and accuses the Gospel of too great severity. Perhaps you yourself have thought and

spoken as the world of this matter; but think of the levity and injustice of this language, in comparing the disturbance produced by romances, balls, and spectacles with the recollection required for the holy and sweet communications of the Divine Spirit.

Vigilance is the second disposition required to receive the Holy Spirit. When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, says the Sacred Text, "a sound from heaven was heard, as of a mighty wind coming." It is in a sudden and unlooked-for way that grace knocks at the door of our heart, and that the Holy Spirit communicates Himself to a soul. He does not consult our time, but we should await His time of coming. St. Paul was suddenly stricken to the earth while on his way to Damascus. It was suddenly that the mysterious star appeared to the Wise Men. We should, therefore, be attentive to the movements of the Holy Spirit; want of vigilance would cause us to lose a multitude of graces which would sanctify us.

It is this want of vigilance in studying the secret movements of grace that each day permits us to miss a thousand happy occasions of performing acts of virtue; our resolutions remain sterile, and our most sacred promises are never realized. But do we not make them in good faith? Unquestionably our desire is sincere, but it is inefficacious because we forget them at the moment when we should keep them. If we are exposed to humiliation, this would be an occasion for us to make an act of

humility. If an injury be done us, this would offer an opportunity for making an act of love. Perhaps we may meet with a disappointment, some opposition, or some suffering; this should be the moment for making an act of patience. Unfortunately, natural impressions precede reflection, and we become unfaithful when, with greater vigilance, we should have acquired a new merit for heaven.

The third condition for receiving the Holy Spirit is to ask it by fervent prayer. "He will give the good spirit to them that ask Him." Grace comes from heaven; therefore we should seek it there, since it is from there we must expect it. Attract the Holy Spirit to you by the profound conviction of your misery and your weakness, by the earnestness of your desires, and by the knowledge which you have of the need of His gifts. Let your soul be before Him as the parched earth, which, by its very dryness, seems to implore the dews of heaven. The apostles were engaged in prayer when they received the Holy Spirit. Then imitate them, pray with fervor, and in asking for the Holy Spirit you ask for the source of all gifts.

Second Point.—The effects of the Holy Spirit. The principal effects of the Holy Spirit are indicated in the Epistle of to-day. He comes like a mighty wind. As the wind drives before it straw and dust and renews the corrupted air, so the Holy Spirit drives away all carnal affections, earthly desires, worldly thoughts, and every evil from the heart. He overthrows all idols and breaks every bond;

He purifies the atmosphere of the soul and expels the miasms of sin.

He filled the whole house. He filled the cenacle in which the apostles were assembled. These expressions should make us understand with what abundance the Holy Spirit communicates His gifts. He fills the Church with them, and enriches her with every virtue and every grace. He showers His gifts on the faithful soul and with as great a liberality as He finds perfect dispositions. Therefore open to Him all the avenues of your soul, widen and extend all her faculties, that He may enrich her with all His gifts.

The Holy Spirit rested on the apostles in the form of tongues of fire. This circumstance reveals to you two principal effects of the Holy Spirit, viz.: He enlightens and gives warmth at the same time. What is more worthy of admiration than the lights which He caused to shine on the intelligence of the apostles? What knowledge of the Holy Scriptures! What intelligence concerning the highest mysteries! Jesus had said to them: "I have much more to communicate to you, but you are not capable of understanding now; but when the Spirit of truth shall come, He shall reveal everything to you." His words were verified to the letter. Men so slow to believe and so densely ignorant have hardly received the Holy Spirit, than they astonish the most learned by their profound science; at length they understand what another Teacher had said to them when they could not comprehend His teachings: "Blessed are

they that mourn, blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice." These truths, which are so opposed to all the sentiments of nature and to all the prejudices of the world, are now believed and accepted, from the first day, by three thousand persons. Oh how great is the power of the Holy Spirit! He whom the Holy Scriptures call the most beautiful among the children of men, He "who went about doing good," in spite of His virtues and benefits could only win to Himself a small number of disciples; but at the first preaching of St. Peter three thousand men became Christians! This is what the Holy Spirit has done for the world.

And while He enlightens the intelligence, the Holy Spirit warms and inflames the heart. He is the Spirit of love as well as the Spirit of truth. Of all the sentiments which agitate the human heart, love is the most powerful. Read the lives of the saints. What self-abnegation we see in their lives! What zeal for the glory of their heavenly Father! What charity for their brethren! With what energy did they repress temptations, and with what contempt did they trample under foot all the seductions of the world! What devotion in the apostles, what patience in the martyrs, and what purity in the virgins! Where shall we look for the principle of all these wonders? We shall find it in the divine love with which the Holy Spirit filled their hearts. But you, oh, how weak you are, and how cowardly! And whence comes it? Either you do not love at all or you do not love enough. Conjure the Holy Spirit,

therefore, to come into your heart and to bless you ; ask of Him to plant His grace deeply in your heart, that He may make known to you all those titles which God has for your gratitude, and may that gratitude lead you to love.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE TRINITY.

First Point.—You owe to the Holy Trinity the homage of your faith. There is not in Holy . . . Writ anything more strongly established than the mystery of one God in three persons. You shall find it expressed in the Gospel most clearly and most precise.

At the moment when the Saviour received Baptism in the Jordan a voice from heaven is heard saying: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." At the same time the Holy Spirit, under the form of a dove, rested on the head of Jesus. Behold, the three adorable persons of the Blessed Trinity, perfectly distinct. Later on, when Jesus commanded His apostles to go and preach His Gospel throughout the world, He said to them: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." These words again reveal the existence of the Holy Trinity. In fact, the design of Our Lord and Saviour was certainly not to baptize the faithful in any other name than that of God, and He indicates three persons in whose name He wishes Baptism to be given. Each of these three persons must, therefore, be truly God, and that

could not be unless they were really and absolutely equal among themselves.

There is but one God; this is the foundation of our faith. But this same faith teaches you that the unity of God is fruitful; that the divine nature, without ceasing to be one, is communicated by the Father to the Son, and by the Father and the Son, to the Holy Spirit. Adore, with a respect wholly filial, the mysterious shadow under which God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—unveils His majesty to mortal eyes. Be faithful, and a day shall come when you shall contemplate Him without veil or shadow.

Second Point.—You owe to the Trinity the homage of your respect. “The Holy Trinity is truly God, who reigns in the highest heavens and who fills the whole earth with His majesty. A Being infinitely perfect, to whom all honor, all praise, all glory is due for ever and ever.” Strive, therefore, to mingle your voice in the concert of blessed spirits who in the heavenly city sing with unspeakable joy and in profoundest abasement: “Holy, holy, thrice holy is the God of armies!” With them adore the eternal Father, the principle of everything which exists; the eternal Son, equal to His Father; the Holy Spirit, equally eternal, and whom we cannot separate from the two other persons. To the three persons give the same worship, the same adoration; and when in God’s temple you shall hear resounding these triumphant words, “Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the

Holy Ghost," unite your voice to the voice of the Church, and sing with enthusiasm to the glory of the august Trinity.

Third Point.—You owe to the Holy Trinity the homage of your love. Everything, in the Church, is done in the name of the Trinity. It is in this name that the august sacrifice of the New Law is offered. The priest at the foot of the altar makes the sign of the cross while pronouncing the names of the three adorable Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is in this name that you have been regenerated at the sacred font of Baptism, and it is in this name that the priest restores you to grace in the Sacrament of Penance. The Church puts this sacred name on your lips at the beginning of all your prayers and all your acts, by these august words: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." How often, perhaps, it has happened that you pronounced these words without thinking of what you said! Accustom yourself, therefore, to pronounce them henceforth with sentiments which should arise in every Christian heart.

"In the name of the Father." He it is who has created us; by a single word He could reduce this world to the nothingness from which He has drawn it. With what respect should we be filled when pronouncing a name which recalls such grandeur and so many blessings? "In the name of the Son." This name recalls all that is tenderest in love, most generous in devotion, and most lovable in virtue. While pronouncing this ever-blessed name, you

place your hand on your heart, as if you would say to the Son that you love Him. Oh, may this sign be the expression of truth and not a vain ceremony! "In the name of the Holy Ghost." It is the Holy Ghost who has sanctified the world; it is in Him, as the source, that grace dwells, or, rather, grace is nothing else than the Holy Spirit Himself. He resides in you as the pledge of your divine adoption; He prays for you in terms which no human tongue can express. When you speak His name, ask of Him the grace never to sadden His heart by resisting His holy inspirations.

Fourth Point.—You owe it to the Holy Trinity to retrace their image in yourself. This image God Himself has deigned to engrave in your soul, since Holy Scripture tells you that God made man to His own image and likeness. If, by imposing silence on your senses, you consider yourself intimately for a few moments, you will easily find the traits of this glorious resemblance. Our soul is simple; God is one, and still there are in Him three things really distinct. As the Father, our soul has being; as the Son, it has intelligence; as the Holy Ghost, it has love. Like the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, our souls have in their being, in their intelligence, in their love the same happiness and the same life (Bossuet). This likeness, which is only commenced in us, must be perfected by retracing in our soul and in our conduct, as far as the weakness of our poor nature shall allow, the divine perfections. It is to perform this glorious work that

Jesus calls us in these words: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." And thus the Christian, on his way to perfection, can find no resting-place: he must "grow constantly from virtue to virtue," until he arrives, as St. Paul says, to "the plenitude of the perfect man, which is in Christ Jesus."

O my God, I love to contemplate Thee in the unity of Thy nature and in the Trinity of Thy persons. No mystery reveals to me better than this one Thy grandeur and my nothingness. The less I understand Thee, the more I adore Thee. The most worthy use I can make of my reason is to annihilate myself before Thee. It is the joy of my mind, the charm of my weakness to feel myself overwhelmed by Thy greatness. May I, O my God, by my fidelity in adoring Thee in the shadows of faith, merit to contemplate Thee face to face, and without veil or shadow, in the city of the elect.

CORPUS CHRISTI.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE FEAST AND OUR DUTIES.

WE celebrate to-day one of the most beautiful feasts of the Catholic Church. Let us meditate on the motives which have induced the Church to institute it, and the duties it imposes on us.

First Point.—Motives of the Church in instituting the feast of Corpus Christi. The principal motive of the Church in instituting a feast in which she surrounds the God of the Eucharist with so much magnificence, when she commands her ministers to carry Him in triumph about the streets of cities and villages, is to make Him reparation for all the outrages that He receives in the august sacrament of His love on the part of bad Christians. Jesus, having wished to constitute Himself a prisoner of love in the holy tabernacles; Jesus, having given us the sacrament of His body and blood for our nourishment, our support, and our consolation here below, should only receive the homage of our adoration and the tribute of our gratitude. Instead of this He is often the object of outrages which are most painful to His heart, by profanations, sacrileges, and the irreverences of which we make ourselves guilty. In consequence of these prof-

anations, the Holy Eucharist, instituted essentially to honor the body of the Saviour, becomes for this very body a mystery of humiliation and ignominy. Yes, the body of the Saviour suffers from us in the Eucharist a thousand times more than it suffered on the part of the Jews in His Passion! In the Passion He only suffered for a time, but here He is exposed to suffer to the end of time. In His Passion He suffered only as much as Jesus wished it, and because He wished it, but here He suffers, so to speak, by violence and by force. If He suffered in His passion, He was in a state of suffering and mortal nature, but here He suffers in a state of impassibility. What He suffered in His Passion was glorious to God and salutary for man, but here what He suffers is injurious to man and to God. What a powerful motive to awaken and excite all your piety for this great mystery?

This feast is one of gratitude for the voluntary humiliations of Jesus in the Eucharist. Place yourself for a moment at the foot of the tabernacle which contains your God, and strive to understand to what humiliations He has devoted Himself for love of you. Humiliations in the solitude to which He is condemned. When He was born at Bethlehem He had the two cherubim of the manger to adore Him, Mary and Joseph, then the shepherds, and, finally, the Wise Men; here almost always He is alone, His temples are deserted, a solitary lamp which swings before the tabernacle is only too often the only homage He receives. Humiliations in the

obscurity of His eucharistic life. He is concealed in the tabernacle; He lives there unknown to the world, as He once lived in the house of Joseph. Humiliations in His state of dependence. Even as formerly He was submissive to Joseph and Mary, so in the Eucharist He is submissive to the commands of the priest. The priest calls Him from heaven and causes Him to descend; he encloses Him in the tabernacle and makes Him come out from it; he takes Him in his hands, lifts Him up, puts Him down, carries Him to the sick, distributes Him to the people, gives Him to children and even to sinners. Jesus obeys, and always obeys. Humiliations in His state of annihilation. Was there ever one more complete? At Bethlehem, He was born in a state of complete indigence. The humanity veiled the divinity, but a miraculous star revealed His presence; if He leads in the midst of the people a painful and laborious life, in contempt and contradictions, all His steps are marked by prodigies and His humiliations do not conceal the Master of the world, since He is recognized by His miracles. If He dies on the cross, His last sigh makes the world tremble, and countless prodigies reveal in the dying man the Son of the Most High. But how shall we recognize a God in the God of our temples?

In the Holy Eucharist, Jesus not only conceals His divinity, but His very humanity has disappeared, and we see realized the words of the apostle with especial energy: "He is annihilated." On to-

day the Church strives to efface many humiliations; she does not wish that the God of the Eucharist should be an unknown God; she withdraws Him from the sanctuary where He reposes, from the enclosure of the temples which contain Him; she carries Him through the streets of the cities, she adores and avows Him as her God. In fine, to set off the display of triumph destined to her King, she puts forth all that is majestic in her august ceremonies, the most sumptuous in her treasures; she strips the earth of its flowers; she borrows from profane vanity its luxury and its pomp, happy to testify to her heavenly Spouse her love and her gratitude.

Second Point.—Our duties on this blessed day. The occupation of a Christian soul on this solemnity should be to enter into the sentiments of the Church, and with her to honor the body of the Saviour. And what is it to honor the body of the Saviour? It is to give Him all the worship which it can receive from us in the Sacrament of the Altar. It is to imitate Magdalene, who had a particular zeal for this sacred body, watering it with her tears, wiping it with her hair, and spreading on it sweetest perfumes. After her example, you should often prostrate yourself in the presence of this sacred body, and there offer to it a thousand sacrifices of praise, a thousand interior adorations, a thousand homages, and a thousand acts of thanksgiving. You should say to it sometimes, with a lively faith and with ardent devotion: “Divine Body, Thou hast been the

price of my salvation; what should I not do to glorify Thee? The heretic despises Thee, the impious outrage Thee, but as for me, O my God, I am happy to offer to Thee the incense of my prayer and the homage of my love." Such are the sentiments which should animate you; and because the body of Jesus shall be to-day carried in triumph, your duty is to contribute to the pomp of this triumph, and to all the extent of your power. You are so fond of a thousand superfluities which serve only for luxury and vanity; there it is that you can sanctify them, by consecrating them to the body of your God, by employing them to enrich the vessels which contain Him and to embellish the tabernacles where He is enclosed, and to adorn His oratories where He remains. You are so careful of your bodies; you love so much to adorn them and to clothe them, and for this purpose you spare no expense! But your body, that body infected by sin, that body which shall soon be only dust and corruption—should it be dearer to you than the body of Christ?

In fine, because the body of the Son of God is taken out of its temples and carried in triumph, what does the Christian soul do? She follows Him in His triumph and gives herself as an escort. This is what the Spirit of God divinely expresses in the spouse of the canticles. She says she has sought her well-beloved in the place where he is accustomed to take his repose; but, she adds, not having found him, she has taken the resolution to go out, to go into the streets and places of the city to

seek him. The guards and the officers of the city have met her; she perceives him in their midst, and at once she runs to him and she does not leave him until she has led him to the house of her mother. This spouse is the faithful soul. To-day she seeks the Saviour of the world in His tabernacle, and she does not find Him there. She then goes through the streets and public places to see if He shall be there. He is there; in fact, she meets Him surrounded by guards and ministers who carry Him with honor, and the whole people make His countless court. She casts herself at His feet, she adores Him, she follows Him with her eyes, she does not leave Him until He enters the temple, which is really the house of her mother. Imitate her, and strive to pay to your adorable King the just tribute of your love and your gratitude.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED EUCHARIST.

THE Church has fixed the feast of the Blessed Sacrament for the first Thursday after Trinity . . . Sunday, and thus she affords her children every facility of testifying their gratitude to the God of the Eucharist. During eight days this adorable Master shall come from His tabernacle and shall be exposed to your gaze, as if He would come closer and closer to you. Oh, how poorly you understand your soul's best interest if you fail to respond to this lovable condescension! To-day reanimate your faith by meditating on the proofs which demonstrate the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist. These proofs are of two kinds: proofs of reason and theological proofs.

First Point.—The proofs of reason which demonstrate the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament are taken from the absurd consequences of the contrary doctrine. If the Protestants are right in declaring that Jesus is in figure and not in reality in the Holy Eucharist, then Christianity—this religion so pure in its moral and so sublime in its dogma, and having all the characters of divinity—was, from the beginning, the most monstrous and

most extravagant religion. It merits justly all the reproaches of superstition, idolatry, and foolishness lavished on paganism. See all the disciples of Christ, foolish victims of error, having at their head their doctors, their venerable prelates, lights of the world by their science and by their virtue, prostrating themselves before bread, which is only a vain image, and adoring it as the Egyptians formerly adored the fruits of their gardens. Calvin, who had come to undeceive the world, merited divine honors much more than Jesus; he should be regarded as the benefactor of humanity, while Jesus would be only an impostor.

In fact, either Jesus foresaw the false interpretation which would be given to His words, "This is My body, this is My blood," or He did not foresee it. If He foresaw it, He should have hindered it; otherwise He has deceived His apostles, His friends, and His Church. He has left her in error during fifteen centuries, and He has failed in His promises of being with her to the end of time. If He did not foresee those false interpretations, He is not God; He is only a cheat and an impostor. And thus the denial of the Real Presence carries with it the denial of all religion. These monstrous consequences should suffice to make us reject as false and impious the doctrine which begets them. But these are not all.

By the interpretation of Protestants, St. Paul is convicted of absurdity. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians he formally declares that he is guilty

of outrage against the body of Jesus who should dare to receive the eucharistic bread unworthily. Are these words, which are so true in a Catholic sense, anything else than an absurdity in the Protestant sense? If Jesus is not really in the Eucharist, or if He is there only in figure, or if the bread is eaten only in faith, can he who participates in this mystery unworthily be wanting in respect for Jesus. Does he abuse His goodness? How are we to understand that such a one outrages the body of Christ? Besides, if it is faith which attracts Jesus in the Eucharist, to the Jew or an unbeliever not having faith the Eucharist is only a piece of ordinary bread; and how can a piece of bread be profaned?

St. Paul has said that the glory of the Old Law was nothing when compared with the sublimity of the Gospel. By the interpretation of Protestants these words are false. In fact, if the body of the Saviour is not in the Eucharist, all the excellence and advantage are on the side of the manna. This bread falls from heaven; it is prepared by angel hands, wholly miraculous and diversified in an infinity of tastes; it is a figure of Jesus far more worthy and more noble than the material bread made by the hands of men, if this bread even after consecration was only a figure. We must say the same of the ancient sacrifices, and in particular of the paschal lamb, whose blood was an image of the blood of Jesus more natural than wine, and especially a more lively and touching image. Contrary

to the words of St. Paul, the Gospel, in this matter, would be inferior to the Old Law and the Church inferior to the synagogue. Reason rejects such a consequence, and it forces us to recognize the Real Presence or to accept the most monstrous absurdities.

Second Point.—The theological proofs are taken from the very words which Jesus employed in the institution of the Blessed Eucharist: "This is My body, this is My blood." Reflect on these words, and say if the Saviour could employ expressions more precise to affirm His real presence. The Protestants who deny it pretend that here the language of Jesus is figurative and that His words must be taken in a metaphorical sense. As if the Saviour had said: "This is the figure of My body; this is the figure of My blood." The falsity of such an interpretation is evident from the very circumstances in which the words were pronounced. Jesus was about to die; at that solemn moment one shall hardly employ language which is figurative and almost unintelligible, and especially when one speaks to friends who are the depositaries of his last will. The Saviour of the world was making His last will and testament, and He bequeathed to the Church His body and His blood—all that He possessed. The very essence of a last will and testament is that it shall be expressed in clearest terms and exempt from all ambiguity; the law requires that the words of such a testament should be accepted in their natural and literal sense. Has it

ever been heard of that the terms of a last will should be interpreted in a figurative sense? But what is the evident meaning of these words: "This is My body, this is My blood"? Is it the meaning which the Church gives them by taking them in their literal sense? Is it the meaning which heretics give them when they assert that they signify, This is the figure of My body? But how can this last interpretation be justified? There are in the world two kinds of signs, viz., natural signs and signs of convention. Now, a piece of bread has never been the natural sign of a body; on the other hand, there is not in the Gospel a single word which ever fell from the lips of Jesus which has made it a conventional sign. Jesus had warned His disciples that He would speak to them no longer in parables. His words should therefore be accepted in their natural sense, and every other interpretation is purely arbitrary and finds no foundation anywhere.

Behold the last will and testament of the Saviour, and the things He has bequeathed us. They are all contained in these words, which assure to the Catholic priesthood the power of renewing, to the end of the world, what He Himself did the first time. "Do this in commemoration of Me." The priest, in virtue of these words pronounced over the bread and the wine, "This is My body, this is My blood," operates this mystery: the substance of the bread and wine disappears, and they become the body and blood of Jesus.

What simplicity, as Bossuet remarks, and what omnipotent power in these few words! After such assurance on the part of the Saviour, what remains for us to do if not to believe, and adore, and love? He says that it is His body, therefore it is His body; He says that it is His blood, therefore it is His blood! My Saviour, be forever blessed for this favor! Thou hast wished to be Thyself the inheritance of Thy children, and Thy love knows how to survive death, in discovering the secret of eternalizing Thy presence in the midst of them.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART.

WE celebrate to-day the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us enter into the sentiments of the Church by meditating on the object of this feast and the duties which it imposes.

First Point.—By instituting the feast of the Sacred Heart, the Church has wished to honor the immense love with which the heart of God has burned for us, and to eternalize the memory of it. In fact, the heart is the seat of the affections and the principle of generous devotion. To establish a feast in honor of the heart of Jesus is, therefore, to erect a monument which shall recall the sacrifices which the love of Jesus for men has imposed on Him. And what is more natural than such an institution? To console herself for the loss of her cherished child, a mother retains a part of his clothing. A child, to solace his sorrow, erects a suitable monument to the memory of the mother whom he has lost; a people set free from slavery wish to preserve the generous heart of the liberator whom death has removed from their gratitude; in fact, it seems that while these precious pledges keep their regrets alive, they still sweeten their bitterness. The feast of the Sacred Heart is a monu-

ment which must constantly recall the love and the blessings of our divine Saviour. In the Eucharist we adore not only His divine nature, but also His body and blood; by a particular feast we venerate His adorable wounds and the very thorns with which His sacred brow was crowned, the nails which pierced His hands and feet, and the cross on which He expired. How then shall we refuse our homages to this Sacred Heart, the noblest and tenderest portion of His sacred humanity?

All blessings have come to us from this divine Heart. By the mouth of Jesus it has published those evangelical truths which teach us the way to heaven. It was the heart of Jesus that wept over Lazarus in the tomb, and over the ill-fated city of Jerusalem—sad figures of a soul stained by sin. It was His heart which prompted Him to heal the sick and call the children to Him, and to pardon sinners and raise the dead to life. It was His heart which poured out its bloody sweat from every part of His body in the Garden of Olives. If it is true that one deserves to be loved in proportion as they love, what love does not our adorable Saviour merit?

Open the Gospel and judge of it for yourself. How amiable He is when He compares Himself to a Father who weeps for very joy at seeing His prodigal son return; when He depicts Himself to us under the image of the Good Shepherd who seeks for His lost sheep; when He pardons the woman taken in the commission of sin, and when He allows the vilest sinners to approach Him. Whom do you

see at His feet? Magdalene, a public sinner. And on whom does He bestow His tenderness and mildness? On the poor children whom He caresses. He meets with a widow who mourns the loss of her only son, and His heart is touched with pity and He commands death to give back its victim. Behold Him at Jacob's well, conversing with the Samaritan woman and revealing to her the secret of His divinity. Is it possible to manifest more merciful tenderness?

But behold the masterpiece of His love! Before the Good Shepherd had given His life for His flock, He had given them His heart, by instituting the Blessed Eucharist. Other shepherds provide food for themselves from their flock, but Jesus gives Himself to His sheep to be their nourishment: "Eat, this is My body, drink, this is My blood." And He shall remain with them till the end of time to sustain and console them. "Come to Me, all you who are heavily laden, all you that suffer, come to Me whosoever you may be, and I shall refresh you." Where shall you find love more constant, words that are sweeter, or invitation more pressing? You are worthy of pity if these thoughts do not reach your heart.

Second Point.—To suitably honor the heart of Jesus, three conditions are necessary: We should invoke it with confidence, imitate it with fidelity, and love it generously.

Invoke it with confidence. It is the heart of a friend, and you could not doubt it for a moment,

especially after reflecting on what has just been told you. You shall seek in vain to find a heart that loves you with more devotion. But besides, it is the heart of a God. You may doubt the constancy of some mortal friend and you may suspect his fidelity; you may exhaust his kindness, for every human love is inconstant and all human goodness has limits; but the heart of a God! ah, no. When human friendship fails, His friendship shall never fail and is the only one worth striving for. How often does mistrust and suspicion invade our hearts and wound the Sacred Heart of Jesus! We think that we shall never acquire piety, or overcome certain defects, or conquer certain temptations; we think, therefore, that Jesus does not love us sufficiently to help us, or that He is not powerful enough to defend us against the demon! Be on your guard against such despairing thoughts. They are one of the most dangerous temptations, especially in certain circumstances, when a great confidence can alone give us the strength to overcome every obstacle.

You should imitate the heart of Jesus if you wish to honor it worthily. To imitate the heart of Jesus is to copy it. Now, when you wish to copy a picture, you must first study it. To copy the heart of Jesus, the first thing to do is to strive to know it well. The god of philosophers is known by the prodigies and wonders which come from his hands, but the God of the humble Christian is known especially by His blessings.

The dove selects the rocks of the deserts in which to build her dwelling, but the faithful soul chooses the heart of Jesus, in which she retires and there reflects in secret. In the heart of Jesus she beholds her own; she contrasts the thoughts, the affections, and the desires of Jesus with her own desires, affections, and thoughts. In the heart of Jesus she finds humility, chastity, charity, patience, love of the cross, and zeal for souls; but in her own heart she finds pride, sensuality, jealousy, love of pleasures, and inconstancy; she strives to dispel all these vicious dispositions and exemplify the virtues of her divine Model. Jesus smiles on her efforts, and sustains them by His grace.

You should love the heart of Jesus. The only request which Jesus makes, the only gift that He would receive from us, is the possession of our heart. "My son," He says to you, "give Me thy heart." And here let us ask, what is our heart, that Jesus asks for it so earnestly? What treasure is concealed there? It is because the most precious of all gifts is the heart, and it renders every other gift precious. But is it not something more? Yes, since to possess the heart is the glorious triumph. Everywhere the victory for Jesus was easy. He walked on the waters, He healed the sick, He commanded the elements; in a word, nothing could resist His power. It was only in the heart He found resistance, and now He considers it His glory to conquer it. Thus, all His efforts tend to gain the hearts of men. In the crib, His tears; on the cross,

His sufferings; in the Eucharist, His humiliations—everything to win human hearts to Himself. Christian, God asks your love, shall you dare to refuse it to Him? It is absolutely necessary that your heart should be given to some one, since it cannot live without loving, nor can it love without bestowing itself on the object of its love. If your heart is to be given or sold, who can better purchase it than He who made it? If it is to be given away, who deserves it better than He who is its happiness and its end? Give your heart to Jesus, and ask Him to accept it and to watch over it, to-day and forever.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CHURCH.

THE Gospel of to-day contains a grand and beautiful instruction. If we reflect upon it well, . . . we shall find in it all the prerogatives which distinguish the bark of Peter, that is to say, the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and the signs which manifest our love for her.

First Point.—"And Jesus, going up into one of the ships, which was Peter's." If Jesus entered the bark of Peter, it was not by chance He did so. He has wished to teach us that if we would find this bark we must seek it in the Church which Peter and his successors conduct and govern. The ship of which Peter is the head is the only one which carries Christ; the others are not with Him nor is He with them. They do not carry His doctrine to the different parts of the world; they carry only the sad inventions of men. Thus the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Greeks, and the Anglicans are not the Church of Jesus, because they are not in the bark of Peter. The true Church is one in its doctrine, in its worship, in its hierarchy, while the others change their morale, their creed, and their worship according to caprice, to climate, and to the

passions of men. In their eternal variations and in their multiplied creeds they openly contradict Jesus, who, in praying for His Church, said to His Father: "Keep them, that they may be one, as you and I are one."

The Holy Roman Catholic Church, which is your mother, since it is from her bosom you have drawn your Christian life, possesses unity of doctrine, and, although she has countless children scattered over all the countries of the world, she everywhere teaches to all the same doctrine; among the savages as well as in civilized countries, to the children of the king as well as to the children of the poor, and she owes this unity of belief to her hierarchy divinely instituted. The Sovereign Pontiff has received, in the person of the Prince of the apostles, the mission to "confirm his brethren in the faith," and as a vigilant sentinel he watches over the integrity of the faith and repudiates every change in it. Think, for an instant, on this phenomenon of the unity of faith, in the multiplicity of the faithful! Two men cannot be in accord for a quarter of an hour, and yet millions of men during nineteen centuries believe the same truths and without discussion submit their intelligence to the same faith. How can this wonder be explained? Represent to yourself a man seated on a rock in the midst of the ocean, and insisting that the waves should observe a uniform motion. You would exclaim: "This is truly a wonder." Well, there is a man who, from his seat on the rock on which Jesus

has built His Church, commands disturbed minds and insists on a uniform method of thinking, and that man is the Pope. At his feet he beholds the rise and flow of human opinions which disturb and overthrow everything in the world, while he does not change, and by his authority he maintains unity in the Church. Is it possible not to see the finger of God in all this?

Jesus in the bark of Peter confirms the truth of His words in the wonder of the miraculous fishing. Thus He has granted to His Church, and to her only, the grace of working miracles in all ages and in all countries. This is the divine mark by which we recognize the bark of Peter. The flight of demons, the resurrection of the dead, the gift of prophecy, and the healing of those who were hopelessly sick—this is what you shall find on every page of the Church's history. While the apostolic men proclaimed God's truths, He confirmed their preaching by miracles. A miracle is a palpable, invincible proof; it is the seal of God placed on the divine word sent from heaven to earth. By the gift of miracles God tells us: It is I who have sent these men, and the proof of it is that I have clothed them with My power, and if they had not been sent by Me would nature obey them? "God," says Bossuet, "has the right to make Himself believed, and also the means to make Himself heard. As soon as an affirmation is signed by these two words, 'I the Lord,' and as soon as that signature is legalized by His inimitable seal—the miracle—it

is He who speaks, it is He who commands, and we have only to believe and obey."

Jesus commanded Peter to launch his bark out into the deep. What does this mean? It indicates the exalted life, wholly supernatural and heavenly, to which the Church, by her doctrine, by her morale, and by the omnipotent power of her sacraments, leads us. In her fold, and there only, we behold the divine virtues brightly shining and men rising to the highest degree of sanctity and perfection. Is this character of sanctity found among the dissenting sects? No, in this regard God has struck them with an eternal sterility, and you shall never find among them a single man who, by his heroic virtues, has won the admiration of the world, as a St. Francis de Sales, a Vincent de Paul, a St. Charles Borromeo, and others.

The deep waters to which Peter was commanded to go represent those regions of the world which are most distant. The Saviour seemed to say to Peter: "I shall place under your shepherd's staff all the nations of the earth. You shall preach the Gospel to every creature, you shall guide the sinners back to the fold, you shall convert the pagans, and of all the people you shall make but one sheepfold, one flock, of which you shall be the only shepherd." And so Catholic Rome extends her activity over the whole world—in the islands of America and Oceanica, among the most uncivilized people of Africa as well as among the polished cities of Europe, everywhere Peter baptizes, preaches, and

converts souls, and, whatever may be the obstacles, he shall always continue until he shall have landed in the haven of safety the last soul that shall ever live on earth.

It is recorded in the Gospel that the bark of Peter was almost submerged. The Church also has been exposed from time to time by tempests so formidable that her enemies have said: "It is all over for the Church," and her friends trembled while expecting to see her engulfed by the flood of human passions. But they who hoped and they who feared for the ruin of the Church did not know the extent of the promises which Jesus had made to His Church when He said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her." Relying on this promise, true Catholics entertain no fear for the Church; they know that Jesus is with her, that He conducts her, He prays for her, and that sooner or later she shall come forth triumphant from all her trials. The past gives assurance for the future. A brutal and barbarous persecution passed over the Church during three hundred years, and the Church triumphed in the conversion of her executioners. Heresies then followed; they were reduced to helplessness, while she remains full of life and prosperous, and the branches which have separated from her languish and ultimately die. The war of passions, pride, pleasure, and impiety arises in every age; the attacks are so violent that the bark of Peter is rudely shaken, but she is never submerged. The enemies of the Church die penitent or impeni-

tent, and silence promptly falls about their tombs, and the Church stands erect on the ruins of her oppressors. This perpetuity of the Church, in the midst of the instability of human things, is one of the most striking proofs of the divinity of her origin. O Church of God, my mother, I am devoted to you from the depths of my heart, I wish to love you and obey you, and to remain faithful to you until death. Guide me, enlighten me, and conduct me to the haven of salvation.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON CHRISTIAN JUSTICE.

JESUS, in the Gospel of to-day, warns you that if your piety would be agreeable to God, it must excel the justice of the Pharisees. He reproaches these hypocritical men, by declaring that all their justice was most culpable since it was purely exterior, wholly incomplete, and most interested.

First Point.—The justice of the Pharisees was wholly exterior. Jesus said to them: "You are careful to cleanse the exterior of the cup regardless of what is within it," and for this reason He calls them "whited sepulchres." St. Luke also speaks of the justice of the Pharisees: "I am not as the rest of men." In what do you excel, vain and proud man? "I fast twice in the week and I pay the tenth of all I possess." He boasts only of his external works, and they that resemble him are attached only to the external observances. The Pharisee does not abandon or despise the practices of piety, or the ceremonies of religion. Exterior worship is a duty, and the sloth or false shame which makes us neglect it is a sin. But it is quite another thing to be engaged solely in exterior

works of piety, and to put aside the virtues which are in the soul; this is really to possess a pharisaical justice.

If your piety be true, it must be united to virtue. To be pious without being virtuous is to cleanse the outside of the cup without putting in it the perfume which must attract the pleasure of God; it is to resemble those whited sepulchres of which the Saviour spoke, which appeared beautiful in the eyes of men, but which were within full of dead bones and corruption. If, therefore, you wish that your worship may be an act of adoration, and not a falsehood, it must be the expression of your interior sentiments; otherwise you shall merit this reproach of the Saviour: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Yes, says Bossuet, to say prayers, to go to church, assist at the holy sacrifice, to take holy water, and to kneel without having the spirit of all this, is pharisaical justice. It seems to have some exactitude, but it is reprobated by God, who wishes to have, particularly, the homage of the heart.

Is this deceitful piety, which was so common in the Mosaic law, very rare in the Church of Jesus Christ? Alas, how many Christians pride themselves on their regularity, and place all their perfection in the fulfilment of the exterior duties which religion commands, while they neglect what is most imperiously commanded—to restrain their temper, regulate their inclinations, and repress their passions! How many are considered as devout people because

they are assiduous in the temple, and who are vain, sensual, angry, and detractors? They are scrupulous at the slightest neglect in their habits of devotion, but they have no remorse for their numerous defects. The reason of this inversion of principles is not easily understood. The external practices are not so difficult as the exercise of interior virtue; the performance of some acts costs less than self-reformation. We, therefore, abandon the duties which require combats against ourselves, to indulge in practices which are more to our tastes. Guard well against this deceitful piety, which will hopelessly ruin you because it forms in you a conscience which is truly false.

Second Point.—The justice of the Pharisee was incomplete. True justice, that which shone in the lives of the saints, is an act of obedience and fidelity to all the commandments: it fulfilled all the law. Jesus has said: "He that loves Me shall keep My commandments." He did not say some of My commandments, nor for some time only, but all the commandments, and always, and at every age. The Pharisees chose, according to their caprice, those commandments which were convenient for them. They practised certain observances which were to their taste, and neglected the most essential precepts. This is the reproach which Jesus made to them, and with a severity of language which clearly shows the indignation with which this vicious piety inspired Him. "Woe to you, Pharisees, hypocrites, because you are exact in

paying tithes, you are faithful in observing certain legal ceremonies, and you forget the essential duties of justice, charity and mercy."

The Pharisees considered it a crime to gather a bundle of straw on the Sabbath day, while on that same day they formed intrigues against Jesus. They took care to wash their hands before their repasts, and charged the apostles with a crime for neglecting this practice; but at the same time they violated the precept which commanded them to honor father and mother. This is certainly a strange combination of piety and sin which can be explained only with difficulty. If we are unfaithful in little things, and stand firm in greater matters, this would be a consequence of our poor human frailty; but that we should discover a piety whose character is to be exact even to scrupulosity in little things, and to neglect things which are essential, is one of the grossest illusions. But it is so frequent that it cannot be guarded against too much. Look upon it as one of the pitfalls which the demon places for souls which he sees strongly attached to virtue. If he tempted them to commit sin, these souls would reject the temptation with horror. Having no hope to seduce them, he strives to lead them astray. He employs, however, the contrary means. It is through their very taste for piety that he tempts them. He places before their eyes the means of apparent perfection, but not real, and inspires them with an unwise ardor in their exercise. Because these practices are to their taste, they re-

main faithful to them nevertheless. And one of the scandals of the world, one of the reproaches which irreligion urges against piety, is to behold true obligations, those which the profession of piety imposes and which justice and charity prescribe, sacrificed to false duties.

To avoid all illusion, we must distinguish well between what is only mere counsel and what is of precept; between the things which are of simple perfection and those which are of rigorous obligation. We should be faithful to the first through love, and to the others through duty. To do that which is only a counsel and to neglect that which is a precept is the sign of a false devotion; to do only that which is of precept and to despise what is merely of counsel is a sign of slothfulness; but to faithfully attend to both, the precept and the counsel, is indeed perfection.

Third Point.—The justice of the Pharisees was interested. They sought only the esteem of men, and cared little for the esteem of God. They prayed to be seen, they gave alms to be applauded, and they fasted to earn for themselves the reputation of being just men. Men, charmed by all their external beauty, honored and venerated them; but Jesus, who read their hearts, exclaimed: "Woe to you, hypocrites, who pretend to pray in public, and who sound the trumpet when you distribute alms, you have already received your reward." But is your virtue really exempt from that gross pride which was the only motive of the Pharisee; is it

wholly disinterested? Pride is very subtle, and there are many little winding ways by which it enters our soul.

That your piety may be disinterested it is necessary in all you do—prayers, alms, good works, confessions, communions—that you should have but the single intention of pleasing God; every other motive shall be a stain on your soul, if it be not completely effaced. And now, is your piety truly disinterested? Indeed, it is not a hypocritical piety, but is it truly God, only, you seek in your devotion? Is it He or His consolations? Is it the thought that you wish to honor God which makes you desire to receive holy communion so often, or that prompts your prayer on certain days? Or is it because you find a certain pleasure in the performance of these exercises of devotion? If God should withdraw that sensible pleasure you experience, would you continue to pray and approach the sacraments? Have these exercises of devotion ceased to be agreeable to the heart of God when they ceased to be consoling to you? Then it is not for God that you have been virtuous and faithful; it was for yourself. We should fear the anathema hurled by our divine Saviour against the Pharisees: “They have already received their reward.”

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

WHILE meditating on the different circumstances of this day's Gospel, you shall find . . . in it the great foundations of Christian confidence, viz., the knowledge of God, His goodness, and His power.

First Point.—The knowledge of God is the first foundation of our confidence in Him. See, by the Gospel of to-day, how all that concerns us is of greatest concern to Jesus, in the past, the present, and the future. For the past: Jesus reminds His disciples that during three days the people followed Him. He therefore knows how long we have served Him, and He has counted all the moments. Our divine Saviour adds: "Some of them have come from afar." Not only does He count the time, but He knows all that it has cost us to come to Him—the temptations we have resisted, the obstacles we have overcome, and the sacrifices we have imposed on ourselves. There is not a step taken for Him that He has not seen and which He does not remember. Ah, how sweet it is to serve a Master who knows so well all that we have done for Him!

For the present: Jesus warns His disciples that

the people are in great need and that He has not wherewith to nourish them. Whatsoever may be the situation in which we are, God sees us and knows all our needs; He knows our misery and our poverty, our losses and our misfortunes, our afflictions and our pains, our temptations and our weakness, our spiritual and temporal wants. Men do not know them, and often they wish neither to know them nor to believe them. Why then do you place your confidence in men, and not in God alone? Why do you not seek your consolation in this sweet thought, that God sees everything and knows everything?

For the future, Jesus reminds the apostles of the danger of sending the people away without having given them some nourishment. Ordinarily it is the future which is the cause of our greatest solicitude; it is the future which the demon employs frequently to disturb and discourage us; but why are we disturbed by a future of which we are ignorant? God only knows it; let us leave it to His care. Not only does He see the future, but He sees it in relation to us; He sees what must befall us, whether it be happy or unfortunate, and He knows the means to put away from us whatever may be injurious and to procure for us whatever may be advantageous. Let us therefore place in Him our entire confidence. Then shall we give Him the most glorious worship that is possible for us, and we shall find, for ourselves, the most precious blessing, viz., peace of heart.

Second Point.—The goodness of God is the second foundation of our confidence. Jesus, having called His disciples, said to them: "I have compassion on the people." The knowledge which God has of our needs is not a sterile knowledge. Alas! men, for the most part, when they see us in affliction remain insensible. The fortunate ones of the world, on hearing of the sufferings of the poor, are but little moved and neglect to bring them assistance. But it is not so with our God. The sight of our miseries excites in Him the sentiments of tenderest compassion: "I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with Me, now three days and have not what to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." What treasures of tenderness are enclosed in the heart of Jesus, since these words escaped from His lips. O my amiable Saviour, whose heart is sensible to all miseries, shall Thou behold mine and not be moved?

The knowledge which God has of our needs stirs His Sacred Heart with compassion; it does more, it prompts Him to assist us. Jesus, having represented to His apostles that the people who had followed Him for three days had nothing to eat, added: "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." Listen to these words, you who follow Christ and who are faithfully attached to Him! Yes, in His service you shall suffer. He will test your fervor and your constancy to a certain point, but He knows how far

and how long your strength will last, and He will not allow you to be tried beyond that. Everything seems to be wanting; your condition has become desperate; relatives, friends, protectors, all have abandoned you; but your God will never abandon you, He will assist you. Where shall this assistance come from? This is the objection which the apostles raise. "Whence then should we have so many loaves in the desert, as to fill so great a multitude?" Whence shall come the assistance? You do not know, nor can you foresee; but should it not suffice to know that God wishes we should have it, and that He does not wish we should be abandoned in our need? Rest assured in the bosom of His infinite goodness, persevere in the sentiments of the fullest confidence, and you shall not be deceived.

Third Point.—The power of God is the third foundation of our confidence in Him. "And taking the seven loaves which His apostles gave Him, He blessed them and distributed them to the people. All did eat and were filled, and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand men, without counting the women and children." What a prodigy! What abundance! And yet this prodigy of power God renews every day in favor of His children.

In the general order of nature every year the earth is covered by new riches to provide for all our needs, the plants grow again, the animals are

multiplied, the grains and fruits are reproduced. This prodigy as admirable as it is constant; a prodigy which should give us an exalted idea of the power of God and fill our hearts with tenderest gratitude. But, ungrateful and unfaithful as we are, we think only of enjoying the gifts of God, without ever thinking of the omnipotent hand which has lavished them.

This prodigy is renewed every day in the special order of His providence. God has secret resources for those who put their trust in Him. The miracles which He employs are not always shining and sensible miracles, but they are the miracles of a Providence as attentive and as admirable as they are hidden. We find some just and charitable souls who aid the poor, assist the unfortunate, contribute to the decorations of the altars, assist in all good works, and who, however, are never in need themselves. The more they give, the more they have to give, without knowing whence or how the abundance comes. Everything prospers with them, and goods seem to multiply in their hands. Whatever they give is as a seed which produces a hundred-fold. It is the consequence of their confidence in Him whose providence governs everything and provides everything.

This prodigy of power is renewed every day in the order of grace. The miracle of the multiplication of loaves is the figure of the eucharistic bread. In what profusion the Lord has provided for the nourishment of our souls? Not only does He give

us His grace, but He gives us Himself, who is the Author of all grace. If we are in need, if we are weak and languishing, the fault is our own. Do we need the bread of the strong, or is the bread of the strong wanting in strength? It is we who need it; we are wanting to ourselves, allowing ourselves to die of hunger in the midst of abundance, either because we refuse to eat of this bread which is offered us, or because we do not partake of it with the necessary dispositions.

O my God, Thou beholdest all my temporal and spiritual needs. Thy goodness is moved by them, and Thou wishest to help me; Thy power is infinite, and nothing can resist Thee. In whom shall I hope if I do not hope in Thee? Ah, Lord, the more pressing my needs shall be, the more my soul shall languish and the greater shall be my confidence in Thee.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON FALSE PROPHETS.

IN the journey of life you walk between truth and falsehood. There are holy prophets who strive to direct you in the right pathway; there are also false prophets who seek to seduce you and to lead you astray. To avoid these false prophets you must know them. This shall be easy for you, since you may judge them by their works. "By their fruits you shall know them."

First Point.—It is in your own heart and in your passions that you shall find the false prophets who are most to be feared. To those perfidious teachers these words of the Saviour are especially appropriate: "They come to you under the appearance of lambs, but within they are ravening wolves." What flatters us more than a passion? What is sweeter to us than its language or more seducing than its promises? Should you listen to it, it will give you happiness and glory—everything will be yours if you consent to open your heart to it and submit to its amiable empire. Thus it is that pleasure promises the sweetest joys. Envy shows us the humiliation of a rival as a most beautiful triumph. But if you are wise you will close your

ears to the voices of these sirens, consider their effects, and then judge them.

We read in the Sacred Scriptures that a woman named Jahel, beholding Sisara hurriedly departing, recalled him by the most flattering words: "Come to my house; fear not, for I shall conceal you from the search of your enemies." Sisara returned at this invitation and at first was entertained splendidly. Jahel gave him milk to drink and clothed him with a beautiful mantle, and he slept in fullest confidence. But while he slept this perfidious woman drove a large nail in his head, and he perished a victim to his credulity. And this is what the passions do; they promise life, a happy life, to those who listen to them, but in reality they are the cause of death—at first the death of the soul by inducing to sin; and they often occasion the death of the body, for every one knows how pleasures, intemperance, impurity, and idleness produce a multitude of maladies and infirmities which abridge the life of those who indulge in them.

Sensual pleasures have all the attraction and sweetness of honey; we taste them without suspicion, and relish their delights; little by little, we sleep and forget God, our soul, and eternity. The habit of living only a material and sensual life becomes as the nail which binds us to the earth, and we are miserably lost. Guard well, therefore, against the voice of passions; learn to rule them, otherwise you shall become their slave; and what greater misfortune can there be than such a slavery!

Second Point.—The second kind of false prophet you should mistrust is the world, or rather the respectable worldlings. If you have to deal with men who are known as infidels or libertines, you will have less to fear, because you will be on your guard. But the men whom you are to question have a reputation for honesty and respectability, and it is this very morality which puts aside every suspicion. They come to you with a smile on their lips, and oh, how charming their language is! It has all the sweetness of honey. Youth must have its pleasures, and to interdict a young person from balls, theatres, and certain books is a species of cruelty! Religion must not exact privations which are beyond human strength! God has not created man to make him miserable, and to forbid him the pleasures of the world is to rob him of every happiness! This is the language of your respectable worldly man, this is what he will tell you, and such are the false prophets of whom you must beware. Judge of them by their fruits. And what are the effects of those books which your respectable worldling counsels you to read? They exaggerate the imagination, falsify the judgment, place the soul outside the limits of truth, and feed it with chimeras. Romantic ideas, loss of time, forgetfulness of the most sacred duties, distaste for life, and, consequently, suicide—behold the fruits of those readings which some shall tell you are innocent!

With regard to the pleasures of the world, unquestionably they are not all equally criminal, but

experience proves how sad, how disastrous they are to virtue. Distaste for piety, abandonment of prayer, hardness of heart, a spirit of vanity and of pride—behold the least consequences of those pleasures to which the world agrees!

The distaste for piety and abandonment of prayer. How can we bring to prayer the recollection it requires on returning from a ball, when the senses and imagination are full of excitement from all we have seen and heard?

Hardness of heart. A person in the midst of the world, accustomed to the society of happy people, never dreams of the sufferings of the poor; if we behold misery, we turn our eyes away in disgust; and, besides, vanity absorbs our resources to satisfy the demands of style and dress, and we never have anything to give to the poor. Be on your guard, therefore, against the world, its maxims, its examples, and especially its pleasures; never forget that one cannot serve two masters; you must stand for virtue or vanity, for God or the world.

Third Point.—The third kind of false prophets which you should mistrust is composed of all the enemies of the Church. Here also the most dangerous are not the unbelievers. They do not come under the shepherd's staff, they do not dissemble, and on that account it is more easy for you to be on your guard against their impious words. Heresy is more to be feared because it conceals the poison of error under the appearance of truth. It is not inclined to show itself such as it is, or to uncover its designs

and to plainly expose its thoughts. It strives to conceal and disguise and hide itself under the staff of the faithful shepherd. To hear some speak, you would think them the true children of the Church, wholly submissive to all her decisions. Equivocations are not their least defects. They place the Church where it seems good for them, and they recognize only those decisions which do not attack their errors. They appear to labor only for God, they call themselves His envoys, and promise to conduct souls to salvation. They support their doctrine by a certain regularity of life; their exterior is edifying and composed; but under a simple garb, under a mortified exterior, they conceal a spirit of fury and hatred, and carry destruction and division everywhere; they are the ravening wolves in the midst of the flocks of Jesus Christ. But the sheep should fly from them, avoid their assemblies, reject their books, and close their ears to their misleading discourses. As an excuse for your relations with the enemies of your faith, you say that you do not indulge in religious disputes. Now either this is to hold your salvation and your religion as worth but little, or you fail to distinguish two things most distinct. Without doubt, all the faithful are not obliged to enter into the depths of disputed matters between Catholics and heretics, but all should be on their guard, lest they give their confidence to false prophets, lest they follow a false doctrine, a doctrine condemned by the Church. This is a precept of Jesus Christ.

If through want of this attention you are seduced or led astray, you can have no excuse. To say also that we should not judge any one is to misconstrue the words of Jesus, and to forget that in the same chapter where He forbids us to judge He commands us to be most attentive and watchful.

O my God, how many false doctors strive to mislead me, by preaching to me a doctrine and maxims which are contrary to Thy doctrine and Thy maxims. Save me, Lord, from the pitfalls which surround my pathway, and do not permit that I should ever cease to hear Thy commandments, Thou who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

THERE are few narratives in the Gospel which are so replete with useful instructions as the . . . parable of the unjust steward. Reflect on these most interesting circumstances, and strive to profit by the lessons which they contain.

A rich man had a steward. This rich man is God, and He alone merits this title truly, because He only disposes of all goods, since He is Sovereign and Master of all. The rich of the world are not rich except by Him; if men have science, wealth, virtue, or beauty, they possess all these goods from His liberality. Besides, these borrowed riches may disappear in one moment or another; their loss may be occasioned by some disgrace, an illness, or a reverse of fortune; while, on the contrary, God is free from all reverses, all accidents, and from every inconstancy.

This man had a steward. We are all the stewards of God, and to all He has confided goods which we should improve. There are goods in the order of nature, and goods in the order of grace. Everything has been confided to us as a trust which we must render fruitful for our Master. Intelligence and genius come from God; we must

employ them for His glory. The faculty of loving is a gift of His heart; we should direct it towards Him who is its principal and its most worthy object. If we have riches, let us strive to employ them in doing Him homage and by distributing them among the poor, who are His representatives. The sacraments, sermons, and holy inspirations are the gifts of God. He has lavished them on us as to His children, but it is on the condition that we make them fructify for His glory by making them serve for our sanctification.

The steward in question here was defamed to his master for having badly administered the goods which had been confided to him. From this learn that God knows everything. He knows perfectly those who are faithful and those who are not, those who are negligent and those who are zealous. Therefore, if He remain silent, if He fail to strike the guilty one, understand it well, it is not because He has not seen him or has forgotten him, but His patient mercy gives us time to think of ourselves and to repair the offences of which we are guilty towards Him. When the time marked by His justice shall come, He shall call us before His tribunal. God calls us all, one after the other, a little sooner or later, but He shall call all without exception. Though we were concealed in an abyss, God need only make a sign, and Death, the implacable messenger, shall hasten to strike us and to cast us at the feet of our Judge. Then our examination shall begin.

What is this I hear of you? A thousand complaints have reached me and directly accuse you. Your conscience groans in its slavery. I have given it to you to be your rule, your guide, and instead of hearing its voice and walking in its light you have stifled its cries, you hold it captive in iniquity, and it complains of the violence you have done it. The poor, whom you should assist according to your means—the poor, My friends and your brethren, complain of your neglect and the hardness of your heart. The blood of My Son whom I have delivered up for you—this blood, which you trample under your feet and which you despise or which you profane in the sacraments, cries for vengeance against you. My ministers whom you insult—these men of peace who have instructed your infancy, guided your youth, consoled your sorrows—My ministers mourn over your sins, the cry of their hearts has reached me. Why then are all these complaints? Now render an account of your administration.

O terrible words! they shall be addressed to us one day; they shall resound in our ears with the sound of thunder which suddenly comes to awake us from sleep in the middle of the still night. O unfaithful Christian! you have been born of virtuous parents, in the bosom of the true Church, and, consequently in the midst of all graces, and of all the means of salvation; to sustain and to sanctify you, you have had the sacraments, instructions, good examples, wise counsels, remorse of con-

science—and what profit have you made of all these graces? “Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer.”

There shall come a day when God shall take from us all His goods, and there shall no longer be grace to aid us, nor talents to improve, nor merits to acquire. That day has already come for many whom you have known, and it shall also come for you, and when it shall come and your stewardship shall have been taken from you it shall be forever. Shall you not draw some practical consequences from such a terrible truth? Shall you live always as if this world belonged to you, and as if you were never to depart from it? Oh! do not forget that you are constantly nearing one of these two alternatives—either an eternity of punishment, if you are a sinner, or an eternity of delights, if you have been faithful.

“But what shall I do?” said the unjust steward to himself. How shall I escape the evils which threaten me? Then it was that a means was suggested which was more cunning than equitable, and which justified these words of our blessed Lord: “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.” The children of the world are they who think only of the present life, and who are occupied only with what interests them on earth. The children of light are they who know that there is another life, who aspire to life eternal, desiring and wishing to gain their salvation. You have the

happiness to be of this number, but compare your prudence for eternal things with the prudence of the worldly for temporal things, and see how much their prudence is superior to yours.

They are superior in action, they do not fear pain or suffering, and it is even one of their principles that we obtain nothing without difficulty. They spare themselves in nothing—humiliating undertakings, prolonged watchings, voyages, fatigues; in fact nothing disheartens them. They are superior in reflection; they wish to be ignorant of nothing which can be useful to them. They study, they examine, they search deeply, they consult, they ask; their whole mind is concentrated on what they desire, and they profit by everything. They are superior in their resources; ill success never discourages them, and they arrange to withdraw from unsuccessful business; then it is that their activity and shrewdness are especially manifest. There are no means which they do not discover, no attempts which they do not make, no resources they do not employ; and when placed in greatest disgrace, they have the secret of still finding resources—witness the unfaithful steward of whom our blessed Saviour speaks. Alas! shall these men be so prudent for the earth, and shall we do so little for heaven? In the matter of salvation we would wish that everything were easy, and we would abandon success, if to assure it we must labor and combat. In our contests for virtue the least reverse discourages us, our falls make us de-

spair, and instead of thinking of the means to repair the past and of fortifying ourselves for the future, instead of animating us with new ardor and of taking new precautions, we are tempted to abandon everything, and we are imprudent enough sometimes to do so.

O my God, should I not blush for my imprudence, for my carelessness, for my sloth in a matter where there is question of Thy glory and my eternal salvation! and when the children of the world are so attentive, so prudent, so laborious, and so persevering to attain their ends? May their conduct be always a living lesson to teach me what I should do for Thee, and to sustain myself in the difficult way of virtue.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM.

ON seeing the Saviour of the world shed tears over Jerusalem, strive to understand under . . . what circumstances He shed them and what is the object of His tears.

First Point.—The circumstances under which Jesus shed tears. Nothing on the part of Jerusalem seems to justify them, and with regard to Himself nothing seems to provoke them. In Jerusalem everything appears to inspire joy, everything breathes of happiness. From afar you may see the rich palaces, brilliant and lifting their domes to the clouds, her splendid temple, and her impregnable towers; you can hear the sound of her joyous population, and the eye of man perceives nothing there which can explain the profound sadness of the Saviour. But the look of Jesus is not the look of a man; it is the look of a God before whom everything is unveiled. It pierces the future, it sounds the depths of hearts, it judges men and things, not after they have appeared, but before they had existence. And now behold the mysteries which the eye of Jesus discovered in the unfortunate city which provoked His tears.

On the Mount of Olives, where He had come to

pour out His soul in prayer, from this lofty summit Jesus saw the fearful storm which was already gathering over the heads of this guilty people. Jerusalem was condemned to perish, and the sentence was irrevocably pronounced. Titus and Vespasian, who were to be the terrible executioners, appeared before the saddened eyes of Jesus. On the very spot where He had received a kind of triumph, Vespasian shall establish his camp for the extermination of the city; thousands of crosses are erected, on which the Jews must expiate their crime of Deicide; He perceives the burning of the city, the fall of its walls, the flight or the death of its inhabitants, the captivity of those who could neither fly nor die, the frightful famine which would compel mothers to devour their own offspring—the scene of desolation which must ruin the proud and unfaithful city was all before His eyes. Then it was He wept over it and its misfortunes. He had predicted it, and He would have hindered it; but His Father had pronounced the sentence, and He could only weep over the sad future of a city which He had loved so much.

On the part of Jesus, nothing seems to provoke the tears He shed. All Jerusalem carries Him in triumph, and the multitude in its enthusiasm exclaims: "Glory to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Some extend their garments under His feet, while others strew flowers on the streets through which He passes. What, then, is the secret of His tears?

Why sadness and sorrow at the moment when everything calls for happiness and joy? Jesus would teach us to restrain ourselves in prosperity by the expectation of the evils which may surprise us. It is written in our sacred books that joy and sorrow meet each other here below, and a day of joy may be the precursor of a day of affliction. It is not, therefore, necessary for a Christian to allow himself to indulge in a delirium of triumph, but it is necessary that he should strive to preserve, in the most lively and legitimate joy, a certain sentiment of sorrow which becomes a disciple of the cross and predisposes him to endure better the inconstancy of men and the reverses of fortune.

"I know well," said a famous orator to the tribune, "that the Tarpeian rock is close to the Capitol." One day the celebrated Ugolin, a chief of the Guelphs, having accomplished a complete triumph over a faction of the Gibelines, invited all his friends to a banquet. He recalled his recent successes, and asked of one of his most devoted friends if there was anything wanting to complete his happiness. "Yes," answered his friend, "the anger of God cannot be far from so great prosperity." He was indeed a prophet without being aware of it, for, some time after, Ugolin was conquered and taken prisoner; then he was imprisoned in a tower with his two sons and three nephews, and there they all died of hunger. Who is there that can securely count on the delusive prosperity which comes to us here on earth?

Second Point.—What is the object of the Saviour's tears? If Jesus weeps, is it not over His approaching passion and death, since, some days later and amid the most bitter sorrows, He consoles the holy women who followed Him? He said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and your children." These words clearly indicate the object of His tears. It is the blindness of the Jewish people—a blindness which was followed by the ruin of their city and the loss of souls. To sin is the sad portion of humanity, but to persevere in crime and to have no wish to rise from that condition is the characteristic of the demon. Now Jerusalem, indisposed and laden with iniquity, rejects the Physician who had come from heaven to heal her; she refuses to know the peace which is offered her or Him who visits her. How could He restrain His tears when beholding such blindness?

That which increased the sorrow of the Saviour was that the unfortunate inhabitants of Jerusalem were amusing themselves at the very moment He wept over them. Everything in the city was festive and rejoicing, although they were on the eve of their last misfortune. "If thou hadst known, on this day, that which can procure thee peace, the day shall come when thine enemies shall surround thee and they shall overthrow thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone." And so the tears of Jesus are disinterested, tears so much the more bitter because of the sorrows which caused

them to flow, because they were shed over a city formerly faithful, loved by God, and filled with His most signal favors.

Several cities of Judea must share the same lot as Jerusalem; Jesus knew this. However, He wept only for Jerusalem. Ah, it was because it was formerly the cherished city of God, and because to-day it was the most ungrateful. When Jesus wept over the tomb of Lazarus the Jews said: "See how He loved him." Why, then, to-day, when He weeps over them, do they not say: "See how He loves us"? It is because all that is hidden from their eyes and they understand nothing of their own history.

The second object over which Jesus shed tears is ourselves. Alas, what a painful similarity to make between us and Jerusalem! And in this similarity how many traits of resemblance afflict the heart of Our Saviour and should cover us with confusion! As Jerusalem, we have been chosen by God as the portion of His inheritance. He has enriched us with His graces. At a certain epoch in our life we received Him in triumph, and we have promised Him an inviolable fidelity. What has become of our promises? What have we done with His graces? Jesus weeps over us, over our innocence lost, over our promises violated, and over the evils which threaten us. To-day are we grateful, at least for the time in which He visits us? It is like the efforts which God makes to bring back the lost sheep—the loving searches of the Good

Shepherd—to the fold; it is like the anxious solicitude of the woman who disturbs everything in her house to find the lost drachma.

God seeks us in two ways: At one time it is His love and His grace which call us to prayer which has been abandoned for a long time, or He knocks gently at our hearts in the assembly of the faithful. Again, it is Divine Justice which chastises us to recall us to the right way, and sends us afflictions to remove from our eyes the bandage which blinds us. Happy is the soul who knows how to correspond to the voice of God, whether it sounds with severity or whether it calls us with love.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

WE cannot better understand the manner in which we should pray than by establishing . . . a parallel between the defective prayer of the Pharisee and the excellent prayer of the publican. Let us, therefore, examine the dispositions of both.

First Point.—The dispositions of the Pharisee. There were good and bad dispositions in his prayer. There was something good in him, because he went to the temple to pray. In this he imitated the example of Jesus. He did what the faithful observers of the law do, and what should be done after the example of the apostles and the saints. He understood the words of Holy Writ, “My house is a house of prayer.” How many men are there to-day who pretend to be better than this Pharisee and still they do not even do as much as he did? And even you, when you go to the temple, is it true that you go there to pray?

The Pharisee gave thanks to God for His benefits. Jesus also thanked His Father in His prayers. This is a duty which the Church is careful to impress on us every day at Mass—“It is right and

just to return thanks to God." The Pharisee understood the duty of gratitude. How many Christians who have been filled with God's choicest blessings do not understand this duty? Are you of this number?

The Pharisee was neither a thief, nor an adulterer, nor an unjust man. Consequently, he observed many of God's commandments—the seventh, which says, "Thou shalt not steal;" the sixth, which forbids adultery; in fact, he avoided what is forbidden by all the commandments, viz., injustice. In many respects he was not of the number of those of whom St. Paul says: "They who do these things shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

This Pharisee did good works; he fasted two days in each week, thereby following the example of Jesus, the apostles, and all true Christians. He gave alms, paid his tithes on all he possessed, and in this imitated Abraham and fulfilled the law of Jesus. Where are the Christians, even among those who are reputed pious, who do as much as he did? We are obliged to praise and admire all this in the Pharisee, but here is what we must blame in him and the reason his prayer was rejected: He was of the number of those who consider themselves just, rely on themselves, and despise others. Spiritual pride, which is the worst of all, blinds the Pharisee to such an extent that he no longer regards himself as a sinner. This it is which corrupts all good works in their very essence and makes his prayer vicious. He is also guilty in his prayer; he

sees nothing in himself which is reprehensible; in fact, there is nothing for which he may reproach or accuse himself, and he regards himself as entirely innocent. It is said, however, that "the just man first accuses himself." David conjured the Lord to pardon him for his hidden faults, and has not St. Paul spoken these words: "Although I do not feel guilty of anything, still I am not justified for that."

The Pharisee, under the very eye of God, enumerated his good works, not to refer them to the Author of every good, but to take pride in them. Instead of saying, "That which I am, I am by the grace of God," he refers all his good qualities to himself; he exaggerates and esteems them far more than they are really worth, and, under the veil of his presumptuous pride, it is not God whom he thanks, but himself.

The Pharisee commits a third fault by comparing himself with the publican, to despise him. By what right does he exalt himself the judge of his neighbor? St. Paul has said: "It is why, O man, you are inexcusable if you judge others; for in judging others you condemn yourself, since you do that which you condemn in them."

It was not enough for the Pharisee to exalt himself above the publican, but in his pride he exalted himself above all men. "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men." With such dispositions, is it surprising that his good works were sterile, his piety rejected, and that he returned to

his house without being justified! Is it not written: "God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble"?

Second Point.—The dispositions of the publican. In the prayer of the publican there is much to praise and nothing to blame. And first remark his profound humility. He remains as far as he can away from the altar, and there accuses himself before God. At the sorrowful sight of his faults, he does not dare to approach near the sanctuary; he considers himself unworthy to appear in the presence of the Lord, he is so convinced of his unworthiness. Accustom yourself to modesty, and do not strive to obtain preference; here on earth, the last place is the best. The divine Master has said: "Whosoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

While the Pharisee was standing erect with his eyes raised to the altar, the poor publican, ashamed and humiliated at his criminal life, trembles in the presence of the Lord and Judge and dares not to lift his eyes to heaven. You are also a sinner; therefore imitate a repentant sinner. As the publican, be penetrated by a salutary shame at the remembrance of your faults, and as he entertain a holy respect in presence of the God whom you have offended and who shall one day be your Judge.

Admire, in the second place, the publican's spirit of penance. He strikes his breast, and by this action he loudly confesses that he has merited the chastisements of God. He strikes his own breast because he accuses himself, without striving to cast

his faults on another. You also have sinned, and by your sin you have incurred the enmity of God. Do you wish to obtain pardon? Strike your breast also, and, humbly at the knees of the priest in the tribunal of penance, do not fear to say: "It is through my fault, through my fault, it is through my great fault that I have sinned by thought and word and deed and omission."

The humble publican adds to this exterior act a prayer which comes from a heart which is truly contrite: "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" Thus it is he speaks to God, and not to himself, as the Pharisee did; he does not enumerate his good works with complacency; he only accuses himself, avows himself a sinner, and asks for mercy and pardon. When you are before God do not rely on your good works and your merits to attract His graces, but recall and tell Him, in the bitterness of your heart, all your sorrows and faults. Let your lips frequently repeat the humble prayer of the publican: "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" and then there shall flow from your eyes those tears of penance which shall merit for you grace and pardon.

And now make an examination of your own conduct. Indeed, you detest the culpable conduct and the haughty hypocrisy of the Pharisee, but have you been careful to avoid it in your own life? As he, you are, perhaps, exempt from the gross vices; in your conduct, as in his, we may see evidences of good works; but are you wholly exempt from pride,

envy, ambition, and those other spiritual vices with which the heart of this presumptuous man was filled? Put away all such sentiments, which are so unworthy of a Christian, and strive to imitate the example of the poor publican! Pray as he did, in the church and out of it, with the same humility, the same fervor, and then rest assured that your prayers shall be heard always.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE DEAF MUTE.

SPIRITUAL deafness is the malady of those who refuse to hear what is useful for their salvation, as the word of God, remorse of conscience, and the inspirations of grace. They who are spiritually dumb never speak when they should; they neither confess their sins nor pray; they are indifferent to the interests of God and the interests of their neighbor. This deafness and dumbness are the vices which, ordinarily, lead to final impenitence. But, on the other hand, there are a deafness and dumbness which are really virtues. Let us strive to acquire these virtues by responding to these two questions: When should we be deaf? and, When should we be dumb?

First Point.—When should we be deaf? Faith teaches us that the ears as well as the eyes are the doors by which the demon and sin enter the soul to destroy it. A Christian should, therefore, know how to close them to everything which could be injurious to his eternal interests—to the suggestions of the demon, to the licentious words of the world, and to falsehood and injuries.

Learn to close your ears against the suggestions of the demon. That which he did to ruin our first

parents he strives to do every day, viz., to destroy us. He does this in two ways. He perverts or reviles the commandments, raises objections against them, alleges pretexts for violating them, and drives the thought of God and the fear of His judgments far from us. When the demon cannot break the law by a false interpretation of it, he presents vice and sin under the most flattering appearances, and he promises happiness as the reward of our degradation. "You shall be as gods," he said to Eve, "knowing good and evil." And when showing our divine Saviour the wealth of the world, did he not say: "I shall give you all that, if you shall adore me"? To such vile suggestions oppose the strictest deafness; to listen to him for an instant is to assure him a complete victory.

Close your ears to the immoral discourses of the worldly; the sweeter the words, the more perfidy they conceal. The fable recounts that the wise Ulysses bound himself to the mast of his vessel and closed his ears to guard himself against the songs of the sirens and to hinder himself from being drawn to them. Act with the same prudence and the same mistrust of yourself against the enchantment of vice; it seeks to charm and destroy you by its impious and shameful words, by its bad books and corrupting songs, by its deceitful pleasures or sad rewards.

Bind yourself strongly to the Church, the divine vessel of which Jesus is the Pilot; close your ears to the language of heretics and their impious words;

reject every doctrine and every word which shall not be in conformity to the word and teaching of the Church, your mother. Close your ears to all slander. It is as much your enemy as it is the enemy of him whom it blackens. It is your enemy, since it seeks to render you an accomplice and to compromise your soul in the eyes of God. It is the enemy of him whom it disparages, the perfidious enemy who strikes the blow in the darkness, who accuses one who is absent and so easily condemned, because it is impossible to justify himself. Follow, therefore, the advice of the wise man: "Close your ears with thorns, and listen not to a wicked tongue."

In fine, close your ears to the words of those who offend you, and patiently bear with their injuries. The pardon of injuries is a most rigorous duty, and at the same time the most difficult duty to perform of all the evangelical laws. Animate yourself in the fulfilment of this duty by the consideration of the great blessings which are attached to it. By the observance of this law you are promised the pardon of your own faults and the certainty of obtaining mercy. "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Strengthen yourself in these dispositions by the example of the saints. Saul, being still the friend of God, heard the contempt and outrage hurled against Him, yet acted as if he had not heard them. David also heard of the injuries of Semeus, but he considered them as so

many envoys of God, and forbade that they should be avenged. In fine, Jesus, the most perfect of all the models, prompts one of His prophets to say of Him: "They have outraged Me, but like one who is deaf, I do not hear, and as one who is dumb, I open not My mouth." After His example we should be deaf to all injuries.

Second Point.—When should we be silent? There is an obligation for us to be silent concerning our merits and our virtues, if we think we have any. Christian humility demands it, and propriety alone imposes silence on us in this regard. What idea can we have of a man who so far forgets the rules of modesty as to boast of himself and to applaud himself for the good he has done, or for the qualities he may possess? A holy father says, if the wise man of the world possess treasures or riches he will not proclaim it in the streets, through his fear of robbers. And so the Christian should conceal his virtues under the veil of modesty, through fear lest the demon and the world should take them from him.

We should remain silent on the secrets which have been confided to us, or which we may have discovered; in either case, we should sin if we divulged them. If we divulge secrets, we sin against charity, which forbids us to do to another what we would not wish to be done to ourselves; and certainly we would not wish that one of our secrets should be made known, even if it were of the slightest importance. If we should make known a

secret which a friend has confided to us in a moment of confidence, not only do we sin against the sacredness of a secret, but we wound the heart of our friend by a betrayal of his confidence; we are guilty of perfidy by employing his friendship as a means to injure him. Let us be virtuous enough not to seek or provoke the confidences of others, and prudent enough not to exercise a kind of curious surveillance over the actions of our neighbor, and accustom ourselves to be engaged with our own affairs and not with the affairs of others; in this way we shall secure the esteem of all, and our conscience shall be content and happy.

We should be silent when anger takes possession of us. Never speak at such a time; you shall gain a great victory over this terrible passion if in these moments of intoxication and folly you are silent when you can scarcely speak without offending your neighbor, and consequently without offending God. The wisest thing you can do is to keep absolutely silent when you feel your heart agitated by anger.

Be silent on matters which offend the holy virtue. Oh, how many souls have been corrupted and lost by impure words and obscene songs! Let us remember that our lips have been blessed and sanctified by Baptism, and that they have received a holier consecration by communion. The place where God has passed should be respected.

Be silent on the defects and faults of others. You are not their judge; you have not to answer

for them before God. Leave to Him, therefore, the care of judging them. What can we conceive more horrible than the viperous tongues which morning and night are employed in defaming some neighbor and blasting his reputation? Make it a rule to be silent concerning others, at least when nothing good may be said of them.

My God, place Thy fear, as a seal, on my mouth and on my ears, that I may never use them except for the interests of Thy glory and my salvation.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

THE parable of the good Samaritan is replete with practical instructions. In the unfortunate man who has fallen into the hands of robbers, stripped, beaten, and half dead, we behold the image of the soul which has fallen into the hands of the demon through sin; and in the good Samaritan we see the image of Jesus, who has come on earth to heal sinners. Therefore meditate on these two phases of the parable—the miserable state of the sinner, and the unspeakable mercy of Jesus.

First Point.—This man who goes down from Jerusalem, the holy city, to Jericho, the profane city, is the image of him who departs from God to give himself to the creature. He is the image of the sinner who descends from the high estate to which grace had exalted him, and who falls into the deep degradation of sin. Oh, how grand in the eyes of God and the angels is the beauty of a soul in the state of grace! This beauty escapes the eyes of men, but God looks lovingly upon it, and calls that soul by the sweetest terms—"My dove, my beautiful one, my friend." The Holy Spirit, whose spouse she is, depicts her by the most gra-

cious images; she is a young tree, planted on the banks of running waters; a lily, whose beauty rivals Solomon in all his splendor and glory; a dove, dazzling by the whiteness of its plumage. But once let her sin, the glory and beauty are lost and she becomes an object of disgust in the eyes of her God.

This man is also the image of the infidel, who descends from the high mountain of faith to bury himself in the depths of doubt. The human intelligence soars above the earth, borne on the wings of faith and instructed by its light; not only does she know her origin and her destiny, but she arises even to God, and regards even the immeasurable depths of the infinite. She reposes on truth, between hope and love; she enjoys and triumphs. Incredulity casts uncertainty into the intelligence, snatches hope and love from the heart, and delivers man up to all the agonies of doubt.

This man is also your image. He is like you, who have abandoned piety and virtue for vanity and the passions. Alas, how you have fallen! Once you ruled your passions with the angels, you worshipped Him whose purity you possessed; the virtue which adorned your heart gave you a mysterious ascendancy which excited the envy of some and compelled the admiration of others, and made you loved by every one. But now you are a slave, and sin has robbed you of your crown and your glory.

This man fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him and left him covered with wounds

and half dead. By quitting God and virtue we fall into the hands of the demon and the passions, whose unhappy slaves we become. Without doubt, it is not by the shame of slavery that the demon and the passions call you when they solicit you to evil, but it is by holding out a sweet independence and the most legitimate joys. Oh, fatal and cruel illusion! These perfidious enemies begin by despoiling you of your goods. They take from you your innocence, and with it peace of heart; they take away sanctifying grace, and with it your beauty and your titles of nobility; they rob you of the holy liberty of the children of God by making you slaves of shameful desires; they take from you your right to heaven, and give you instead hell for your final destiny. They cause you to lose the merits of all the good works which have enriched the past years of your life, and place you in the impossibility of henceforth doing any work meritorious in the sight of God. What nakedness and what misery!

Nor is it enough to strip the slave of his clothing, but the demon wounds him in all the faculties of his soul. Under the sway of passions, the intelligence is weakened, memory is dulled, the most beautiful instincts are perverted, the heart is hardened in evil, and only too often health itself is ruined and the most splendid fortunes are swallowed up.

And after this ruin what becomes of the sinner? His executioners leave him half dead. Cruel truth!

when a soul has lost her faith and innocence the world abandons her and covers her with contempt. Unfortunate soul! she is more dead than alive, since she has lost grace, which is the source of spiritual life. And even after she has recovered grace by penance, she still preserves a certain weakness, which is at once the consequence and the expiation of her first faults. O my God, how can I recall the sad effects of sin and again consent to commit it?

Second Point.—The mercy of Jesus for us. God has not abandoned sinful man. The Son of God was moved to pity at the sight of our miseries, and what has He done to heal our wounds? He has become man. Jesus is the good Samaritan on His journey, who comes near to the wounded man and takes compassion on him. Alas! sin had separated us from God so wonderfully far that if God Himself had not come to us never should we have been able to return to Him. By the mystery of the Incarnation the Son of God took the first step towards our poor nature; He found it stripped of all its prerogatives, wounded in its intelligence and will, deprived of its supernatural life of grace, and condemned to eternal death. To devote Himself to the salvation of our souls was the first act of His mercy.

He instituted the sacraments. These are the sovereign remedies of our souls with which He has surrounded us. Baptism is the sacred bath in which our souls are cleansed and purified; the soul

draws from it a new life and a second birth more glorious than the first. The Eucharist pours out upon our heart the wine which strengthens it; it gives us the energy necessary to resist concupiscence and to triumph over our passions. In Confirmation the divine Samaritan spreads on our soul the holy oil which soothes and makes it easy for our will to accomplish whatever is painful in the practice of good. In the tribunal of Penance He pours out on our wounded and sin-laden hearts the balm which consoles, purifies, and heals. Can you ever worthily recognize such an excess of love?

The Samaritan descends from his beast and puts the poor wounded man in his place. This is a striking image of the Redemption wrought on Calvary. By substituting Himself in our place, Jesus has taken on Himself all our iniquities and all our miseries. By extending Himself on the cross He has suffered for all our wounds, and by dying for us He has opened heaven for us, which is the dwelling of His Father.

But the final trait of God's mercy for us is the institution of His Church. The Samaritan conducted his wounded guest to the inn, where he took care of him; on the following day he paid all the expenses. The inn in which wounded souls receive aid and assistance is the Church. There the intelligence finds truth in a sublime teaching, wounded hearts find assistance in grace, and all unfortunates find a solace in the sweetest consolations.

O Jesus, divine Samaritan, I am that traveller whom the robbers have stripped, wounded, and left half dead on the roadway of life; Thou hast had pity on me, Thou hast placed me in Thy Church, in the midst of the abundance of grace. Do not permit that I should be ungrateful enough to forget Thy blessings, but crown all Thy graces by giving me the strength to profit by them.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE TEN LEPERS.

AS these ten unfortunates of whom the Gospel speaks to-day, leprosy stains you also if you . . . are a sinner and your soul is disfigured in the sight of God. Your healing shall be assured, as was theirs, if you know as well as they how to profit by the passing of Jesus. Then take them for your models, and while reviewing the different circumstances which accompanied their healing, learn on what conditions you shall obtain your own.

First Point.—Prayer is the first condition to be healed from the leprosy of sin. God sometimes acts towards the sinner in a manner truly royal. He enlightens his mind, touches his heart, and converts him by an immediate grace without any condition on the part of the sinner, as He did with St. Paul on the way to Damascus. But ordinarily it is by prayer we attain to grace, and the first condition to be converted is to ask and obtain this grace. You have a beautiful instance of this in the Gospel narrative concerning the ten lepers. See with what humility and with what fervor they implore their healing. They do not come to ask for their

restoration to health singly; each one feels his unworthiness too much to hope to obtain it if he is alone; they therefore unite to give by their union greater force to their prayer, and together they conjure the Lord to have pity on them.

Nor do we see them approach the divine Master with too much familiarity and imperiously demand that their request be complied with. They remain at a distance, contenting themselves by uttering loud cries to attract the Saviour's attention and to win His pity—"Jesus, Teacher, have pity on us." The first disposition we observe in the conduct of the lepers is a respectful humility. This is also the sentiment which should rule all others when we are in the presence of God. Alas! who are we before Thee, O God of sanctity, if not unworthy lepers! Our whole life is only a sequence of shameful weaknesses, and how shall we dare to approach Thee without trembling and with souls which are stained by so many faults?

As soon as the lepers saw that Jesus was within sound of their voices they began to cry aloud. They cried aloud because they were far from Him, and they feared lest they should lose such a splendid opportunity. And so, when you feel that you are far from God and slothful and dissipated, raise your voice and cry to Him. That is not the time to relax your exercises of piety, or to cease your prayers; but it is, on the contrary, the time to prolong them, and to pray more ardently. Ah, if you could understand the misfortune of being separated

from God, with what ardor would you ask for His love, what zeal would you bring to the fulfilment of all your duties!

Second Point.—To the humble and fervent pray-ers of the lepers, Jesus answers in words of mercy: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." The work of conversion obtained by prayer is completed in the sacraments of which the priests are the only min-isters. Without doubt Jesus could heal these unfortunate men without imposing on them the con-dition of showing themselves to the priests. He could also reconcile sinners and pardon them with-out the intermediary of His Church, but He did not do so except in rare instances, and then the desire to receive the sacraments was necessary. The rigorous condition is to go and present ourselves to the priest. Our healing and consequently our salvation are attached to our docility in the fulfil-ment of this obligation.

There are those who prefer those other words of the divine Master: "Come to Me, all you that suf-fer." They regret that Jesus has placed some inter-mediaries between Him and sinners. On this sub-ject listen to the teaching of St. Paul: "When Jesus was on earth," He permitted sinners, publicans, and the sick to approach His sacred person, and He healed them; but now that His mission is accom-plished, now that His blood has been shed drop by drop, sinners cannot hope to treat with Jesus personally. To conciliate His justice with His love, Jesus has appointed the priests as mediators

between Him and the guilty. He has made them His ambassadors, He has given to them the power, and it is from them that sinners must expect their reconciliation. "He has placed in us the word of reconciliation."

If, then, the leprosy of sin has disfigured your soul, the remedy is easy. "Go, show yourself to the priest," uncover to him the hidden wound which sin has made in you; it shall be quickly closed and you shall find peace and life. What is there to hinder you? Is it the magnitude of your crimes? They can never be as great as His mercy. Is it shame? No one should be ashamed to confess his faults. The free and generous avowal of a crime not only repairs it, but exalts us before God to the very level of innocence. Is it fear? Of whom are you afraid? Are you afraid of the world? And what is the judgment of the world to you? Would you, by chance, sacrifice your soul for the world? Is it the fear of your confessor? Ah, how poorly you know the spirit with which the minister of Christ is clothed! You shall find him a father rather than a judge; his lips speak no blame, they know only how to bless you. Go, then, with confidence; once this first step is taken, you shall see all difficulties smoothed away. But go to him with docility! Jesus says to the lepers, "Go to the priests," and they depart without murmuring, without raising the slightest objection, and their submission is rewarded by their complete healing. This result is infallible in favor of all who know how to bring to

the reception of the Sacrament of Penance the dispositions it requires.

Third Point.—"One of them when he saw that he was made clean, went back with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks; and this was a Samaritan." What astonishes and at the same time humiliates us is that, of the ten lepers who experienced the bounty of the Saviour, only one returns to manifest his gratitude, and moreover the Gospel is careful to tell us that this one was a Samaritan. And so, too often, souls whom we believe lost, men who are strangers to faith, hopeless sinners, manifest for God more gratitude, more fervor, more love than we who boast of our fidelity, and boast also that we have never wearied in the ways of virtue. Whence comes this inexplicable carelessness? Alas, we have become familiarized with the most precious graces, accustomed to the wonders of God's love, enriched by His benefits, and we have grown insensible to them all. It is by the blood of Jesus that we shall recover health and life, and out of ten there is hardly one who is found grateful. And thus the heart of Jesus bitterly complains: "Were not ten made clean? . . . There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

To recompense this fidelity, Jesus adds a new grace to the first. He said to him: "Arise, . . . thy faith hath made thee whole." He had said to the others: "Go, show yourselves to the priests, and

you shall be healed;" but He said to this one: "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

But was not faith the cause of healing all the others? Unquestionably; but Jesus wished to establish a distinction between physical healing and salvation. Ten are healed, but only one is healed and saved, because he only had shown gratitude. Thus a good confession can heal your soul, but it does not suffice to assure your salvation. We must return to Jesus in gratitude and remain faithful to Him by persevering in His love. It is on this condition that you shall merit to hear these welcome words: "Arise, . . . thy faith hath made thee whole."

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

“BEHOLD THE LILIES OF THE FIELD AND THE BIRDS
OF THE AIR.”

WHEN Jesus invites us to consider the lilies of the field and the birds of heaven, there . . . must be useful lessons to learn from them. Therefore let us strive to understand and seek to know, then, first, what the lilies of the field teach you; second, what the birds of the air also teach.

First Point.—What the lilies teach. The lily is a beautiful but fragile flower; to-day it blooms in freshness, to-morrow it shall be withered and dead. This is your picture. Your body is as the grass, and all its glory is as the flower of the fields. Isaias tells you: “The grass has withered and the flower has fallen, because the Lord has breathed upon it.” All that is about you, all that is in you except your soul, is like to the lily of the field, which to-day is alive and to-morrow is dead. You should not, therefore, count on the world which passes, on man who passes, on youth which passes, on beauty which passes, on science which passes—for what trust can we give to that which is only transitory?

The beautiful appearance of the lily is the image of riches here on earth below; the rich ornaments

quickly perish. St. James says: "Riches shall pass away as the flower of the field. The sun rises burning and the grass is parched, and the flower has fallen with all its beauty, and thus the rich man shall wither in his journey." In fact, are not riches destroyed by fire, by shipwreck, and carried off by thieves, or, at last, by death? Flowers, however fresh and fragrant they are, however sweet and agreeable they are, become bitter and withered. And so riches are sweet and agreeable as long as we possess them, but how bitter they are at the moment of losing them! The flower gladdens your eyes for an instant, but it is useless for your life, and becomes the food of animals. And so it is with riches; they charm the eyes, but they do not satisfy the heart; and the day comes when strangers or ungrateful heirs seize them. They laugh at us who have imposed so many privations on ourselves to leave them the treasure intact. Hence the wise man says: "I have seen under the sun an evil common among men; it is a man filled with riches, having treasures of honors, but who has not had an opportunity of enjoying them; a stranger has come to enjoy them in his place." And then he adds: "Behold a great sorrow."

The lily teaches you to put all your confidence in God. The Saviour of the world says: "God has planted the lilies of the field; He has watered them, preserved them, and adorned them more magnificently than Solomon was in all his glory. Now if God has taken so much care to clothe and adorn a

simple flower, how much more shall He care for man, who is the masterpiece of His hands and the king of this material creation?" Therefore have confidence in the providence of your heavenly Father.

Jesus, while speaking of the lilies of the field, says that which should serve to humiliate us immensely. You who have been watered by the abundance of His grace, and cultivated with so much solicitude, make such little progress in virtue. "See how they grow." Under the light and the dews of heaven the lily grows and each day becomes more beautiful, while you, instructed by the admirable lights of the Gospel, the soul made fruitful by the dews of grace, you should grow every day in virtue, constantly arising from this miserable earth to heaven, which is your true country. Do you do so? Can it be said of you: "See how they grow"?

Lilies are the ornament of the places in which they grow. You should be the ornament of the Church in whose bosom you live; you should shine in the world by your virtues. You should be pure as the lily and arise towards heaven as the lily, and as the lily give forth a sweet perfume—the perfume of virtue; you should heal by your good example and soothe by your sweet words the spiritual evils of certain hearts, as the lily heals and solaces some wounds of the body. When, therefore, you see the lilies of the field, consider them; reflect on the lessons they teach, and strive to be-

come in the eyes of God and your neighbor a lily without stain, embalmed with the perfumes of virtue, and then you can spread about you the good odor of Jesus.

Second Point.—What do the birds of heaven teach us? They teach us to abandon ourselves wholly to Providence with the most filial confidence. See those little beings whom Providence provides for in millions. They neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and yet they live—the heavenly Father nourishes them. They have confidence in God, and are not anxious, except in moderation, concerning their food. They are the poor for whom Providence provides; they live from day to day, and still no one is richer than they are. They make no provisions for the winter, as some other animals do, but rely on God, and He has never failed them. It is our divine Saviour Himself who proposes this example for us, to engage us to put aside all solicitude and anxiety for the future; and also to excite us to place in God our fullest confidence. He adds: “Are you not of more value than they?”

The birds also teach us to raise our thoughts to heaven and to live a supernatural and heavenly life. Consider that the birds for the most part spend a great part of their life in the regions of heaven; they descend on earth only to find their food; they then fly back again to chant the glory of their Creator. And we also should have our hearts on high; our thoughts and our desires

should tend constantly to heaven, our souls should habitually arise to God on wings of prayer and faith. Oh, how beautiful and happy our life would be if we knew, as the birds of heaven, how to live a life wholly celestial even while we are upon earth! to sing the praises of God even while watching over our temporal interests! Then we should use the things of the world "as if we used them not." This detachment is most suitable for beings who have been created for heaven, where they expect an eternity of happiness, and not for this earth, where everything is perishable.

Begin, therefore, to cultivate sentiments which are truly Christian; place your fullest confidence in God, who clothes the lily of the field with so much glory and who gives so abundantly the food for the birds of heaven. Do not forget that you are honored by the title of the child of God, you are purchased by the blood of the Son of God, you are destined to possess God in heaven, and, consequently, that you are of more value than all the flowers of the field, all the birds of heaven—yes, you are of greater worth than the whole world. It is to recall your noble destiny that Jesus wishes you while praying to say: "Our Father who art in heaven." It is also to afford you an opportunity of meriting reward that God gives you clothing and food and health and life. Be grateful therefore for all these gifts, and testify your gratitude by a holy life—by a life worthy of the heaven which awaits you.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE WIDOW'S SON RESTORED TO LIFE.

IN the resurrection of the widow's son we should consider what grace does for sinners, and what the sinner should do to correspond with this grace.

First Point.—What grace does for sinners. This young man, whom death has taken in the very flower of his age, is the image of so many young persons who are deprived of sanctifying grace by sin and whose spiritual death is more terrible than that which merely destroys the life of the body. This desolate mother who accompanies to its last dwelling-place the inanimate body of her son is the Church; she is our mother; since she has begotten us in Christ in our infancy she has nourished us by her first lessons, and she does not cease to instruct and exhort us, and she labors untiringly to make us grow in virtue and in piety. This tender mother follows with her tears all her unfortunate children whom the sad stroke of sin has robbed of the life of grace. And even when all hope seems lost she does not abandon them; she asks them again from Jesus by her sighs and tears. Touched by her sorrow, Jesus is moved at the sad

condition of an unfortunate sinner whom the passions conduct to hell.

Jesus drew near. This is the first condition of a return to God and virtue. Unhappy beings as we are by our own depraved will, we can indeed go far from God and hasten to our destruction; but to leave the ways of iniquity, or even to desire to do it, is the effect of grace. How good God is! Insulted and outraged by sinners, He had no need to avenge Himself, but merely to abandon them to themselves. Still He does not wish to do so. He selects them, pursues them, and urges them to return to Him and save themselves. "He drew near and touched the bier." Thus it is that Jesus touches the sinner by the good sentiments with which He inspires him, He disturbs him by remorse, He enlightens him by good counsels, He encourages him by holy examples, He terrifies him by the fear of death and by the judgment which follows.

By this secret touch of grace conscience is awakened as if from a long sleep, and the passions which were dragging him down are arrested. The sinner begins to find pleasures not so pleasant and the world not so lovable; he stops short in the midst of the excitement which carries him away. This is the moment when grace is at work; it is the moment when she may make her voice heard. Alas, as long as the sinner is dissipated by pleasures, preoccupied by human interests, absorbed by business, he sins and he perseveres in his sin. This terrible indifference can be explained only by a want of reflection;

but at the moment he reflects he is saved. The prodigal child perceived neither his ingratitude, nor his degradation, nor the rags which covered him, as long as he was absorbed by pleasures; but it was in his misfortune that he reflected, and that one inward glance sufficed to reveal to him all his shame and to lead him back to his father. And so it is with the sinful soul: hardly has she been arrested, hardly has she looked upon herself than Jesus makes her hear His voice, which shall recall her as it recalled the young man from death in the city of Naim—"Young man, I say to thee, arise."

Young man, you who are meditating on these words, you are only on the threshold of your career. You may think that you are proof against the stroke of death; the world tells you to take advantage of your youth, to crown yourself with roses while they are fresh and in bloom; but the world deceives you. This young man whom they carried to the tomb was as young as you. The funeral cortége which accompanied him proves that he was rich. He was as you are—the idol of his mother, the only son, but nothing could guarantee him from death. To you, as to him, Jesus speaks these words: "I, thy Master, command you to arise from sin and to break the bonds which hold you in slavery. I say to thee, arise!" May you be docile to this voice, which calls you to life by recalling you to virtue.

Second Point.—What the sinner should do to correspond with grace. The first thing which the

young man does when he feels himself restored is to arise in obedience to the command his Liberator has given him. This promptitude to correspond with grace as soon as it is felt is one of the most essential conditions of conversion. Everything is possible to the will when it is excited by grace, enlightened by its light, and inflamed by the holy ardor which the divine Spirit spreads in it when He communicates Himself to it. Then the strongest bonds are easily broken; remember Magdalen at the feet of Jesus. The greatest obstacles are overcome by the wise men journeying far to follow the star which leads them to Bethlehem. The most violent passions are conquered. St. Paul becomes a vessel of election, after having been the most ardent persecutor!

Now, why are so many sermons sterile and unfruitful? Why do so many graces remain unprofitable? Is it because the preachers are wanting in eloquence? No. There are indeed some truths which require to be presented in a certain manner to strike some souls; but is there need of having recourse to the artifices of eloquence to tell you that you must die, that you shall be judged, that there are a hell and an eternity? Is it because hearts are too hardened? Not a year passes that some sinners are not touched and their hearts moved, and yet very few are converted. And why? Because very few profit by the moment of grace. They hesitate, they defer, they put off—the light disappears, grace is withdrawn, and they remain

irresolute and in their weakness. They are doubly unfortunate men, because they conceive the most generous projects and cannot attain the point of realizing them.

The Evangelist observes that the young man after his restoration began to speak. Of course his first words were the expressions of his gratitude, the declaration of his resurrection, and the request to those who carried him to set him free. Such should be the language of the sinner whom Divine Mercy deigns to withdraw from the state of death in which he had been plunged. Penetrated by the immense benefit which he had so little merited, he should from the bottom of his heart return grateful thanksgiving to his Benefactor. But this is not enough. He should put away and reject far from him all that which hitherto, by leading him into sin, conducted him to hell. Occasions, habits, affections—he must quit them all. In fine, he is obliged to manifest his resurrection by the splendor of his virtues. The greater the scandal of his sinful life, the greater should be the edification of his new life.

Jesus crowns His work by restoring the young man to his mother. You may judge by the tears she shed over this cherished son what was her care to preserve for him the life he had just recovered by removing the cause which occasioned its loss. Jesus likewise confides to the Church those whom He has drawn from spiritual death, and this tender mother surrounds them by her care. She instructs

them by her lessons, sustains them by her exhortations, strengthens them by her sacraments, and hinders them from falling again into death. If ever you have the misfortune of losing the life of grace, do not despair; but be generous in your correspondence to the goodness of God when He shall recall you to Him.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON HUMILITY.

OUR divine Saviour allowed no occasion to pass by without extolling humility; and it must be . . . admitted that it is the base, the foundation of all the other virtues. We shall consider it to-day in its different kinds and in its object.

First Point.—The different kinds of humility. The first is the humility of the heart. It consists in voluntarily embracing the practices of humility; in not taking offence at calumnies; in not being angered by humiliations; and in not being offended by injuries. It goes even farther in the most fervent Christians. We have seen the saints desire to be humiliated, to cherish affronts, and to rejoice at being contemned and despised. St. John of the Cross asked of Our Lord but one grace, viz., to suffer and to be despised for His love. Alas! how far you are from these sentiments, you who are so sensitive to an injury, so particular about preferences, and so susceptible when your self-love is wounded! Do not forget that self-love is the principle of almost all the faults which stain the soul in the eyes of God, of all the defects which make piety odious in the eyes of men, and of all

the caprices which dishonor a Christian in the eyes of the world. Strive, therefore, to destroy, if not completely, at least to weaken, this terrible enemy, which has such a firm hold on your whole being. To accomplish this end, profit by the countless little occasions where your self-love is hurt to do violence to it; each humiliation generously borne is a blow which shall weaken your enemy and prepare you for a complete victory.

The second kind of humility is the humility of speech. The precepts of the Gospel and the maxims of the world equally recommend this; the sentiment of decent propriety should suffice to engage us to be faithful to it. He who extols himself should feel that he is doing just what degrades him. He seeks admiration, and he finds contempt only. He wishes to make himself important, and he renders himself only ridiculous. It is astonishing the disgust which boasting inspires—it is so universal and so common. How does it happen that the criticisms and raileries which are heard on every side concerning vain men do not correct their vanity? They are, therefore, very blind.

Besides openly boasting, there is another manner of praising one's self which is more skilful but no less reprehensible. It consists in not naming one's self, but allowing every one to perceive who is praised. He does not eulogize his good works, but takes care to make them known. It is rarely that this refinement deceives men. Their own pride makes them see clearly the pride of others, and

instead of the esteem they craved for, the vain inspire only mistrust and contempt.

The third kind of humility is humility in actions. Our divine Saviour especially recommends this in the Gospel of to-day when He says: "When you are invited to a banquet take the last place." This precept finds its application not only at the banquet, but it extends to all the circumstances of life. It condemns the desire of self-exaltation and commanding, which is one of the most common sentiments and one of the most dangerous among men. They wish for the first place in the affections, and hence the love of dress and all the artifices of vanity. Not only do they wish for the affections, but they wish for them to the exclusion of every one else, and hence jealousies and bitter disappointments. They wish to excel all others by their success and triumphs, and hence rivalries among equals and accusations of injustice against superiors. It is to the desire of self-exaltation and of ruling we must attribute almost all the oppositions to authority in the family and almost all the crimes which are committed in society. Accustom your pride to submission, and your self-love to endure humiliations; then you shall destroy the principle of many faults, and dry up the source of many bitter disappointments.

Second Point.—The object of humility. You should be humble in your own eyes. The first degree of humility is nothing else than the knowledge of yourself, of your frailty, of your inclina-

tion to evil, your passions, your vices. This knowledge of your misery which your experience gives and which faith reveals to you, should it not force you to be humble? How can you be so presumptuous when you are so weak? How can you dare to nourish thoughts of pride when you have so much to blush for? How can you afford to resent some affront when you are so worthy of contempt? How can you love yourself when you are so unlovable?

Does this kind of humility consist in denying that there is something good in you and not seeing the advantages you have above others either in wealth or in mind? Not at all. Humility is not falsehood. The truly humble heart never forgets that its good qualities, its talents, and its virtues are the gifts of God. It knows that all that it is, all the good it has done, comes from God; consequently it cannot assume any vanity whatever. Does it witness the fall of one of its friends? It thinks that if God had placed it in the same circumstances as this man, without giving it the most abundant graces, it would fall perhaps into the most criminal excesses. The two considerations of the concupiscence which it feels and the grace it experiences; concupiscence leading it to evil, and grace which alone retains it in well-doing; concupiscence which it can with difficulty resist and grace to which it is so difficult to respond—these two considerations retain the heart in humility and hinder it from rising above others less favored and

committing greater sins than itself. Thus it is that the humble heart, while not forgetting that it is exalted above others, does not glorify itself, but refers all honor to God, the Source of all good.

You should be humble before God. This duty need only be exposed to be believed. You would strive in vain to form even a remote idea of the infinite distance which separates man from God. How then can we express what it is not possible for us to conceive? We are but nothingness, while God is the Sovereign Being. We are only weakness; God is Omnipotence! We are only sinners; God is Sanctity itself. It is this last consideration which should especially profoundly humiliate us before Him. Yes, we should be more ashamed of our corruption than of our frailty; of our ingratitude than of our nothingness; everything should humiliate us before God; everything—even the remembrance of what He has done to exalt us. Have we not abused His very gifts?

You should be humble in your thoughts with regard to your neighbor. Humility forbids all contempt for others and all pretension to superiority. To see the justice of this rule which humility imposes, consider that your thoughts of pre-eminence come from the superiority which you think you have over others, whether they are in the order of nature or the order of religion. If they are temporal advantages—riches, beauty, birth, talents—which raise you above others in your thoughts, how futile they are? How small is the difference

that these distinctions make between one man and another. They are like to the bubbles which children make and which ascend in the air; they are dissipated and dissolved in the moment they appear.

If you esteem yourself more than others by reason of advantages in the religious order—virtue, good works, and piety—while the motive would have some solidity, it would not have, in you, more justice. What have you, the Apostle asks, that you have not received? And if you have received it, how do you dare to glory in it as if it had come from you? Your pride is more than ridiculous; it is unjust, since you rob God of the glory which is due to Him.

O my God, all that I am and all that I have come from Thy grace; do not permit that I abuse Thy gifts to offend Thee, but grant that all that is in me may serve to glorify Thee.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

MOTIVES FOR LOVING JESUS.

WHEN we seek for motives to love men, we must look for them outside and beyond them, but . . . when we seek for motives to love Jesus, we shall find them within Him, in His own sacred person. St. Bernard wished for no other motive for loving God than God Himself; and we must say also of Jesus that we must love Him because He is sovereignly amiable.

First Point.—He has, in all its perfection, all external beauty. Human nature, in fact, is found in Jesus in all its primitive purity, in all its perfect beauty—such as it came originally from the hands of God, since His divine body is the masterpiece of the Holy Ghost, who has formed it in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin. Besides, Jesus is called “the most beautiful of the children of men.” David, to whom was given the happiness of seeing this ravishing figure of Christ across the centuries, is so struck by it, that he promises Him dominion over all hearts, the conquest of the universe, and without any other arms than His own marvellous beauty. He said: “Go, most beautiful of men, with your admirable beauty, with your good grace so natural to you, advance, combat, and reign.”

“Consider,” says Bossuet, “the Cæsars, the Alexanders, and all the other destroyers of provinces who are called conquerors. God does not send them to earth except in His fury. Their victories are the sorrow and despair of widows and orphans. They triumph over public ruin and desolation. Ah, but it is not so with my Prince. He is the Captain Saviour, who saves the people because He has conquered them, and He conquers them by dying for them. He employs neither fire nor sword in subjugating them; He combats by blessings, by all-powerful attractions and by invincible charms.”

Although only a child, Jesus exercised even then this irresistible empire. He is born in a stable and lies in a crib, and shepherds prostrate at His feet and adore Him. The Wise Men from the extremity of the East offer Him their most precious presents. Hardly had He been presented in the temple than the holy old man Simeon takes Him in his arms, and, pressing Him to his aged heart, asks to die. He said: “Why should I wish to remain longer on earth, since my eyes have seen the Desired of nations?” At an age more advanced, does it not seem that they who had the happiness of knowing Him should say when sorrows fell upon them, “Let us go and see the Son of Mary,” and they would return consoled for having seen Him?

In heaven the contemplation of His beauty is the happiness of the blessed spirits, and it is also the sweetest consolation for the just on earth. Hear

the tender and affectionate words of St. Augustine: "For me, wherever I behold my Saviour, His beauty is always a charm. He is beautiful in heaven as He is beautiful on earth; He is beautiful in the bosom of His Father, and He is beautiful in the arms of Mary His Mother. He is beautiful in His miracles and He is no less beautiful under the scourges of the Jews. He has a grace unparalleled whether He invites us to life or when He despises death. Even on the cross He is beautiful, and everywhere He is worthy of love."

Jesus possesses the beauty of eloquence and the grace of language. The Psalmist had predicted of Him that "grace should be on His lips." In fact, the parables which fell from His sacred lips charmed the multitudes; they followed Him in crowds, and the pleasure of hearing Him made them forget to provide for their ordinary wants and nourishment. While hearing Him the people said: "Never has any one spoken as He has;" and the mothers exclaimed: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the breasts that nourished Thee!" By His simple word He subjugated the most indocile mind, and imposed silence on His enemies. He commanded men to follow Him, and the children whom He called did not delay, not even to give to their fathers the duties of sepulture. He asked of His apostles, who were astonished at the profound mysteries of His doctrine, if they too would abandon Him, and they answered by prostrating themselves at His feet. "Where shall we

go? 'Thou alone hast the words of eternal life.' And it is especially when He speaks of the glory of His Father that Jesus is admirable. When the prophets, says Massillon, speak of God, the expressions lack the magnificence of their ideas; they exhaust the weakness of human language to respond to the grandeur of Him whom they endeavor to depict. This shows the infinite disproportion which exists between the immensity of the Supreme Being and the feebleness of the human mind; and the most pompous terms are never sufficient to express their admiration. But when Jesus speaks of the glory of His Father, He does so with a familiarity and a simplicity of language which suppose in Him a sublimity of knowledge which renders the idea of the Sovereign Being familiar. It is easy to see that it is the Child who speaks the language of His household. The children of kings speak of sceptres and crowns in a simple, familiar manner, and, also, it is only the eternal Son of the living God who can speak so familiarly of the glory of God His Father.

Jesus has the beauty of virtue. There is no virtue of which He has not given us the precept and example. He alone among all the legislators and all the moral doctors has instructed better by His example than by His words. All His words and all His acts breathe only humility, charity, and goodness. He is born in the midst of men, and it is to inspire them with a contempt for riches and a love for poverty; His palace is a stable and a man-

ger serves Him for a cradle; He passes thirty years hidden in the house of a simple artisan, and when He begins His public life the first words which fall from His sacred lips are the beatification of poverty—"Blessed are the poor." They wish to make Him King, but He hides Himself by flight from the enthusiasm of the people. His omnipotence multiplies prodigies and His modesty forbids the sick to say that He has healed them. He is the object of the most odious accusations, of the bloodiest outrages; still He permits Himself to be outraged and calumniated without uttering a word of complaint or in self-justification.

The charity of Jesus equals His humility. In the study of His life it would be difficult to say which of these two virtues shone forth in Him with greater splendor. Two of His disciples wish to call down from heaven the fiercest fire on a city which had refused to receive them. But He said: "Ye know not of what spirit ye are. The Son of man has come not to destroy souls, but to save them." He calls to Him the little children, places them on His knees, embraces them, blesses them, and then gives them back to their happy mothers. He allows the greatest sinners to approach Him, and speaks to them only in kindness. He sends away without condemnation the woman who was taken in the commission of sin, and consoles the penitent Magdalen. All His miracles are blessings, and one of the witnesses of His life sums it up with as much nobleness as simplicity in saying: "He went about

doing good." The splendor of His virtues can alone explain the strange dominion which Jesus exercised on whomsoever He approached. They with whom He dwelt were unwilling He should depart. "They detained Him, lest He should leave them." Philip speaks to Nathaniel of the Messias: "What good can come from Nazareth?" "Come," Philip said to him, "and see for yourself;" and when he had seen Him: "Ah, Thou art truly the Messias, the Son of God," and he became one of His most fervent disciples.

In fine, Jesus possessed the beauty of self-sacrifice. More than beauty, more than eloquence, more than virtue itself, self-sacrifice excites our enthusiasm and triumphs over every resistance. Well for you—yes, for you, the Son of God, the Creator of the world, the Sovereign Lord of all things has become man; He has become a little child; He has suffered hunger, thirst, poverty, and the contempt of men; His very love has nailed Him to a cross!

O soul redeemed by His blood, here acknowledge your crime if you do not love such a Benefactor! O Lord Jesus, make me love Thee. Thou hast become my Father, for Thou hast given me life of intelligence, the life of grace, and eternal life; Thou hast become my Brother by Thy humanity, the Spouse of my soul by the union which Thou hast contracted with me in Baptism. Be then the King of my heart; it is to Thee only that I am devoted. Thy love shall be my life, Thy law

shall be my law; I shall sing Thy praises and never shall I cease to proclaim Thy mercies. I wish to be faithful to Thee; I wish to belong to Thee without reserve. I wish to consecrate to Thee all my cares; I wish to live and to die in Thy service.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC.

[N the paralytic healed so miraculously by Jesus, the holy doctors see the image of spiritual paralytics, in whom sin has exhausted the sources of supernatural life, or in whom tepidity has stopped its activity. In the zeal which these men display who are so afflicted, they find two circumstances worthy of our meditations, viz., the conditions and the signs of a sincere return to God.

First Point.—Conditions of a sincere return to God. These men whom the Holy Spirit here presents to us as models have with difficulty come to Jesus. They are stopped at the door of the house by a multitude whom all their efforts cannot resist. But their zeal is not lessened. Their ingenious charity finds another way to Him. Rather, He to whom faith conducts them suggests the way they must follow. And you also must expect to find obstacles in your return to Jesus. The enemy of your salvation shall oppose your return by the illusions of the world, the seductions of pleasures, the authority of examples, vain words, the fear of opinions, and foolish railleries.

But it is in yourself especially that you shall find the most dangerous arms. They are the ardent

passions which you must repress, agreeable inclinations which you must reform, flattering tastes which you must abandon, cherished associations which you must break, and inveterate habits which you must overcome. Imagination, which still more increases the difficulty, terrifies you; only the idea of efforts to be made prevents even the first step. Alas! how much this sad fear of contest against one's self puts to flight the courageous resolutions and renders void the most salutary projects.

If the sick man of whom there is now question was discouraged; if, yielding to obstacles, he stopped short; if, despairing of reaching Jesus, he had ceased to seek Him, the unfortunate man would have been a victim to his infirmity during his life; and, what is more deplorable still, he would die laden by his sins. This is the condition of sinners whom sloth restrains at the very outset of their penitential career, or whom weakness prevents from performing it. Indeed, we should mistrust ourselves, but can we not confide in God? He has promised us His assistance; shall we doubt His fidelity? Implore this assistance with which you cannot fail to triumph, but think that it is to your efforts that God shall grant it. He wishes to supply for your weakness, but not for your will. He consents to aid you, but He commands that you shall begin to act. He adds to your strength what is wanting, but He requires that such as it is you must employ it. See the paralytic who is pre-

sented for your model. He strives to come to Jesus with all the strength of which he is capable; in his inability to go and cast himself at the feet of Jesus he puts himself in the hands of charitable persons who carry him there. Imitate him; if your soul, paralyzed by a long sequence of sins, feels no longer able to endure their weight and can only give forth vain desires, entrust yourself to a zealous director. He shall guide you, he shall carry you if it is necessary, even to the feet of your Redeemer. His science shall enlighten you, his experience shall guide you, and his charity shall sustain you. What you think you are unable to do he shall teach you; and what you really cannot do he shall do for you. His prayers, which are agreeable to God, shall make yours heard. He shall be at once the happy mediator who shall obtain your pardon and the merciful judge who shall pronounce it.

Second Point.—Signs of a true conversion. In healing the paralytic, Jesus gives him three different commands which announce the different characters of the conversion of a sinner. He commands him to arise, to take up his bed, and to return into his house.

The first mark by which we recognize that a sinner is truly converted is when his soul, once lifted up to God, is no longer grovelling in the things of earth, and, strongly maintaining itself, it remains with constancy in the state of rectitude in which grace has placed it. We do not consider the sick

man cured when each time he strives to rise he falls back through want of vigor. We must pronounce the same judgment on a soul whose feeble efforts to arise, not having the necessary strength, are continually followed by relapses. Is not this the judgment we must pronounce on you—you who make of your life a continual alternation of penance and sin? You have not the courage to cut loose entirely from the world; you have not the generosity to give yourself entirely to God; you are tossed about successively from your fears to your weakness. Do you think you have recovered health when you take in the way of salvation only wavering steps and when the least obstacle disturbs you and casts you down? “Arise,” said the Saviour; but remember that a relapse is worse than the original malady, because, already weakened, you have less strength to bear this and to accept the remedies.

In the bed which Jesus commanded the paralytic to take away, the fathers see the symbol of habits, affections, and the passions to which the soul was addicted while she was paralyzed. There she rests, there she languishes, there she remains, incapable of movement. After her conversion the objects of her affections become for her a burden. Her crime was to taste of the pleasure, and a part of her penance shall be to feel its burden. Sinful soul, do not hesitate to take up this bed of miseries to which you were so long confined. You must take it up, or you shall continue to lie upon it. But take

courage. Your burden shall become less heavy in proportion to your willingness to carry it; your passions will continue to torment you, especially in the beginning of your conversion, but they will grow weaker in the measure you resist them, and you shall regain the dominion over yourself.

Jesus commanded the paralytic to return to his house. This is also the command He gives to a converted soul. By sin she went out from herself to give herself to creatures; her conversion should consist principally in re-entering herself and remaining there constantly recollected. This separation from dangerous objects, this interior retreat, are at once the precious effects, the manifest sign, and the assured guarantee of a solid penance. Those sinners are not truly converted whom we see, after some equivocal marks of repentance, not avoiding the occasions which led them to sin, forming again those associations which were their ruin, and returning to the pleasures which corrupted them. You see the most perfect, just those innocent souls that have never been stained by a mortal sin, tremble at the approach of the world and fear its empoisoned breath lest the delicate flower of purity should be withered. And you, who with the knowledge of your weakness and the experience of all your falls should stand in fear and in continual circumspection—you imprudently expose yourself to the contagion by which you were so often attacked, and again expose yourself to the danger to which you have so often succumbed! How can you

think that your desires of virtue are sincere? Fly, therefore, from the world, where everything is a pitfall for your virtue; and, if you are obliged to live in it, make a solitude for yourself, where you can often enter—there to purify your soul from the vile dust by which the commerce of the world surely soils even the most religious hearts.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE WEDDING-FEAST.

UNDER the emblem of the King who, desiring to celebrate the wedding-feast of his son, . . . sends his servants with a command to invite the guests, we must recognize God Himself. He wishes to celebrate the wedding-feast of the Lamb, that is to say, the union of Jesus with His Church, His well-beloved spouse. It is by faith that we acquire the right to celebrate the mysterious nuptials of the Lamb, since it is by faith that we become members of the Church and by it we are spiritually united with Jesus in the world while expecting to be perfectly united with Him in heaven. The invitation of the King who calls us to the wedding festival of His Son is the vocation to the faith, by which we are admitted to a sublime vocation, an inestimable blessing which is the principle of every other, and which, if we correspond to it, shall procure for us all blessings. That which the Apostle St. Paul only asks of the faithful of Ephesus is that they should walk in a manner worthy of their vocation. It is also what God asks of us, and it seems to be the first duty which vocation to the faith imposes on us. How many men who have had the misfortune to be deprived of this

signal favor would know better than we how to profit by it? On the day of judgment they shall be compared with you. It is Jesus Himself who tells you this, and they shall experience an indulgence very different from the rigor with which you shall be treated.

The King sent his servants to those who had been invited, but they refused to come. He sent a second time, and bade his servants say to the guests: "Behold, my banquet is ready; come to the wedding. But they neglected, and went their way, one to his farm and another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hands on them and put them to death." These words reveal to us in all its extent the goodness with which God acts in our regard, and especially the goodness He manifested towards the Jews. He had invited them to the nuptials of His Son. Was it then necessary that He should invite them again? The choice which God had made of them to be His particular people, the advantage He had given them over all other nations by making them know His holy name, by making them the depositaries of His sacred promises—should not this bind them to God irrevocably? Should it be necessary, after giving them His law, for God to send them again His servants and raise up prophets to remind them of His commandments and lead them to their observance?

However, we see Him constantly renewing His entreaties; to His neglected warnings He added new ones, and with a goodness which only He

could manifest. And in the midst of all the witnesses of His merciful goodness we see this privileged people almost always unfaithful, ignoring the hand from which they received all goods, and falling from one idolatry to another. In the desert, even when their mouths were filled with the manna, they blasphemed Him who nourished them, and in their Deicide the Israelites did not cease to repay by innumerable outrages the countless blessings with which God had filled them. Such enormous ingratitude astonishes you, and, in fact, it should surprise you, if you were not obliged to make the same reproaches against yourselves. Alas, how many graces have you received from God. And how have you repaid them? When has He ceased to be kind and have you ceased to be ungrateful? Every moment of your life is a blessing, and almost every moment is an injury to Him.

The excuses alleged by the guests represent the reasons which hinder so many Christians from responding to the invitations of God. In some it is their interest in temporal things, their care for self-aggrandizement; their desire of augmenting their possessions and increasing their fortune absorbs them. In others it is dissipation and pleasure; they are solely occupied in passing the present life agreeably; they never reflect on the future life; their whole idea is to make for themselves one round of pastime and amusement; or, rather, they have no fixed or settled idea—they think only of

enjoying present goods in the measure that they present themselves. They run from one amusement to another, flying from the weariness which pursues them, and this weariness often attacks them in the very midst of their pleasures.

To these two classes of men, who neglect for frivolous objects the honor which the King wished to do them, Jesus adds a third, which unites cruelty with indifference; they seize the servants of the King, outrage them, and put them to death. Here you see the Jews who, after delivering Jesus into the hands of the executioners, become the most bitter persecutors of His disciples and apostles. When they could, they persecuted the disciples and put them to death; when they could not do this themselves, they raised up persecutors, urging the Gentiles against them and exciting the magistrates to shed their blood.

By the terrible vengeance which the King took on the murderers, Jesus makes manifest allusion to the vengeance He shall take later on the crimes of which the Jewish nation was guilty towards Him and His disciples. The army of which He speaks is the army of Vespasian, who delivered Jerusalem to the flames, exterminating the inhabitants and dispersing the remainder of the Jewish people.

But it was not only the Jews who persecuted the servants of Jesus. The annals of the Church record many other persecutions which she endured in different countries and at different times. They were bloody persecutions, and they were followed

by persecution of another kind—less cruel, indeed, but perhaps more dangerous and more to be feared because it is perpetual and without interruption. It is the bitterness with which the enemies of God pursue by their calumnies, their outrages, their defamations, and their railleries those who practise virtue. Arm yourself with courage to resist this kind of persecution, and remain faithful to your God in spite of all the obstacles which you must overcome.

The King enters the banquet-hall to scrutinize the guests. This is a figure of the judgment we must undergo at the moment when, departing from the militant Church, we shall go to join the Church triumphant. The garment with which you must be clothed to assist at the nuptials of the Lamb represents sanctifying grace, received in Baptism or recovered by Penance. It is this nuptial robe which St. Paul had in view when he said to the faithful of Colossa: "Put ye on, as the elect of God, the bonds of mercy, goodness, humility, modesty, patience, and, above all, have charity, which is the bond of perfection."

It is the King Himself who perceives a man seated at His banquet who has not on the nuptial robe. Nothing escapes the eye of God, before whom everything is naked and uncovered. Do not flatter yourself to be able, when you shall present yourself at His tribunal, to conceal anything from Him. The Supreme Judge can neither be deceived nor seduced. To punish the boldness of this rash man

who had dared to sit at table without a nuptial garment, God caused him to be cast into exterior darkness, the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Behold the inevitable destiny of those who die impenitent.

O my God, Thou hast called me to the faith, Thou hast called me to take part in Thy Church, to enter into participation of all its riches; Thou hast given me a right to Thy inheritance and to Thy kingdom; Thou hast called me to sit down at the delightful banquet which Thou hast prepared for Thy elect. O my God, give me the grace to preciousely preserve the nuptial robe in which Thou hast clothed me at Baptism, and, if I have the misfortune to lose it by sin, then help me to recover it in the Sacrament of Penance.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

JESUS HEALS THE SON OF THE OFFICER.

IN the Gospel of to-day we are called upon to consider the zeal and the ardor of the officer of Capharnaum. He hastens to the Saviour to ask the healing of his son, and we cannot fail to observe his lively faith and the graces he received from Our Lord Jesus Christ.

First Point.—"An officer whose son was sick at Capharnaum, having heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, went to Him and begged Him to come and heal his son." This officer had a son, the object of all his tenderness, who was sick; the malady was so violent that there was no hope of his restoration except by a miracle. Jesus had already done a great number of miracles in this city, but He had left it. What a sad plight for this unhappy father, on the point of losing all that was dearest to him in the world! In his sorrow he inquires and is informed where Jesus was; he had heard all that had been said of Him, and he learns that Jesus had left Judea and had gone to Galilee. Then, fearing that Jesus would arrive too late at Capharnaum, he determines to set out to meet Him and to ask Him to hasten His journey. He will not

entrust this mission to any one, but leaves his son to seek assistance for him. He departs without thinking of the length of the journey or the fatigue. Have for the salvation of your soul the eagerness which this father had for the health of his son, and you shall discover, as he did, all that contributes to your health, your sanctification, and your perfection; you shall not be arrested either by human respect or by shame of confessing your faults, or by the difficulties of the sacrifices you may make.

If the officer of Capharnaum now gives you a lesson by his eagerness in going to find Jesus, he gives you another, no less important, by the fervor of his prayer. Hardly had he found Jesus than he begged Him to come and heal his dear sick one. But Jesus said to him, "Unless you see miracles and wonders you do not believe," and the officer insists by saying, "Come, Lord, before my son dies." The prayer of this man was indeed defective, because he seemed to think that Jesus could not heal his son except He was near him; but how admirable are his fervor, his humility, and especially his perseverance! A confidence less solid should fail before a reproach which had all the appearances of a refusal; but, far from being disconcerted, he humbles himself and gives to his prayer a fresh energy. He exclaimed: "Lord, my son is near dying; hasten, I conjure you; come quickly before he dies." O happy father, not to be rejected! His perseverance is rewarded. Jesus said to him: "Go, your son is healed." Strive to know the Master

whom you serve. If He defers hearing you, if He seems to reject you, it is His love which prompts Him to act so and for your greater good. Ask Him, therefore, in confidence, but ask Him with an entire resignation to the designs of Providence, for all temporal goods, health of body, success in your studies, success in your enterprises; if He refuse you, then believe it is for your interest and bow down to His holy will. Ask Him for spiritual goods. God owes them to you. Ask them of Him eagerly and with perseverance, and rest assured He shall grant you always more than you ask of Him.

Second Point.—Consider the beginning, the progress, and the recompense of this man who comes to implore the healing of his son. His faith is not an enlightened one; the idea which he had formed of Jesus after what he had heard of Him in Capernaum was very imperfect. He believed, it is true, that Jesus could heal his son, but he did not believe He could heal him without seeing him, touching him, and speaking with him. He did not know that Jesus could work miracles at a distance as well as near at hand, when absent as well as when present, and that a single act of His will was sufficient. He was far from believing that Jesus was the Son of God, God Himself, the Creator and Master of the universe. Have you a more precise idea of Jesus? Have you such an idea as faith gives and demands? Should the divine Master address you as He once addressed the apostles, "What think you of Me?"

could you respond without hesitation and with the same assurance as St. Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"?

The progress of his faith. The reprimand of the Saviour had made an impression on this man; and when he heard Jesus in tones of authority pronounce these words of hope, "Your son is healed," he believed in the words of Jesus, and departed fully persuaded his son should be restored to him. Therefore he believed in this miracle without having seen it; he ceased to be of the number of those of whom Jesus had just spoken, who did not believe unless they had seen.

On his return the servants, who had been witnesses of the sudden healing of their young master, met him and said: "Your son liveth." At this happy news, he does not permit his heart to indulge in vain joy. He forgets himself and thinks only of his Benefactor. This prodigious event shall have for him practical and important consequences. He asks of the servants at what hour his son got better, and recognized it was at that very moment that Jesus said: "Your son is healed." "He believed, and his whole house with him." Then it was that he understood that Jesus had not only predicted the healing, but had also accomplished it. He was struck at the sight of a power so divine, and he believed not only in the words of Jesus, but in Jesus Himself. He recognized Him as the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the Saviour of the world. May your faith in Jesus

likewise grow in proportion to the benefits you receive from Him.

Recompense of his faith. The first recompense which this happy father received was the restoration of his son to health. What reward for his long journey, his fatigues, and his sacrifices! And for us, also, our first and sweetest recompense when we shall sincerely seek Jesus shall be the healing of our soul. We shall recover the beauty of virtue, peace of heart, and the friendship of God and our rights to heaven. What a happiness! Can we ever do too much to merit this?

The second recompense he received was the perfection of his faith. The faith of this man which came from seeking Jesus was indeed generous; but, observe, it was also an enlightened faith. When he had left Jesus it had received a wonderful increase which exalted it to the very perfection of faith. He believed without reserve the words of Jesus, regarding Him as the Messias, the one by whom alone we can have access to God. And not content with believing in Him, he inspired his whole household with his faith, and gained for Jesus all those hearts over whom he had authority. God does not cease to lavish His blessings on you, but shall they serve to increase your love for Him and your zeal for His glory?

Who could not grieve for this man when he saw his son, whom he loved so much, at the point of death! And still, that very circumstance which made him an object of compassion in the eyes of

men was the means of leading him and his household to Jesus. Oh, how little we understand our true interests when we complain of God and murmur against the dispositions of His providence! Ah, rather than murmur, let us adore the profound wisdom of God, directing us in all things. After the example of the model we have just studied, let us also profit by sickness and afflictions. They should prompt us to have recourse to God, to unite us with Him intimately, and to detach us from the world more and more.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE INSOLVENT SERVANT.

[N the Gospel of to-day there are three circumstances which present themselves for our consideration: the clemency of the master towards his insolvent servant, the cruelty of this servant towards his debtor, and the justice of the master with regard to this heartless servant.

First Point.—"The kingdom of heaven is like to a king who would take an account with his servants; but when he began to make this accounting, there was one who owed him ten thousand talents." The King who demands an account of His servants is God, the Sovereign Lord of the universe; his servants are the entire human race. Yes, we are all the servants of God; we all have an account opened with Him. This account must be made to Him willingly or unwillingly, either in this life at the tribunal of His mercy, or in the next life at the tribunal of His justice.

The servant of whom there is question now owed ten thousand talents, and for this large amount was indebted to his master. What an enormous sum, especially for that time! Jesus here employs a hyperbolic expression, and wishes to make us understand the extent of the debt which we have contracted with Divine Justice and the little pro-

portion which exists between our sins which have offended God and the wrongs with which we can reproach our neighbors. This reproach serves to demonstrate the goodness of God, who remits our debt and our injustice, although we refuse to pardon our brethren. Recall now, if you can, the sins without number which make up the immense debt which we owe to Divine Justice, and see what should be our condition if God had treated us according to our merits.

“As the servant had not wherewith to pay, his master ordered that he should be sold and his wife and his children and all he possessed.” This was the ancient law with regard to insolvent debtors. The lot reserved for an impenitent sinner is still more terrible. You know what awaits him, and, strange to say, you rest in greatest tranquillity. Oh! in the name of your dearest and best interests, do not sleep in this sad tranquillity, but while there is yet time imitate the servant of the Gospel and profit by the lesson he gives you. “He casts himself at the feet of his master and conjuring him says, Have patience with me and I shall pay thee all I owe.” But you are still more insolvent than he; you have no other resource than the bounty of the Master whom you have so criminally outraged. Therefore prostrate yourselves before the Divine Mercy; however great the debt you owe Him, it shall be pardoned you if your repentance is sincere.

“The master of the servant had pity on him and

let him go." O admirable effect of repentance! Hardly has the sinner confessed and deplored his fault than mercy pronounces the happy sentence which pardons. All his sins have been pardoned, they have been effaced, they have disappeared, they are as if they had never been. "I shall remember them no more," said the Lord. Oh, how consoling are these thoughts and words! Oh, how unhappy and how blind you should be if you should refuse a pardon which can be obtained on a condition so easy!

Second Point.—"But when that servant was gone out he met one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred pence, and laying hold of him he throttled him, saying: 'Pay what thou owest.' And his fellow-servant falling down besought him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I shall pay thee all;' and he would not, but went and cast him into prison until he paid the debt. Now his fellow-servants were indignant, and told their lord all that had been done." And why should they not be indignant at the conduct of this servant, who, at the very moment he was the object of such great goodness on the part of his master, should treat his companion with so much cruelty? The indignation is redoubled when we compare what was due him with what had been remitted—the enormous sum of ten thousand talents, which the generosity of the master had remitted, and the small debt of one hundred pence, the payment of which he requires with so much heartless rigor.

Without doubt, you applaud the conduct of the other servants, who, in their indignation, inform the master of what has happened. But shall not the angels one day give testimony against you? While you implore God to pardon you your faults, the immense debt which God is ready to pardon you with a liberality which is truly royal, do you not refuse to pardon your neighbor the slight wrong he may have done you? Understand it well. The pardon of injuries and the love of enemies are contained in the precept of charity; or, rather, there is no charity possible without the fulfilment of this twofold duty. In fact, it was not necessary for Jesus to come and tell us to love those who love us; this is the friendship which was known before the coming of Christ. It was not necessary that He should teach us to do good to the unfortunate, to pardon an enemy, since beneficence and clemency were known and practised before His coming. Thus Jesus, by imposing charity on us, has only anticipated us in our duties, and does not limit Himself to that. You know that He has said: "I tell you to love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, that you may be worthy children of your heavenly Father who makes the sun rise on the good and the wicked. For if you love only those that love you, what recompense shall you deserve?" Weigh well these words, and see what we should think of those Christians who call themselves Christians and refuse to pardon; or

of those who pardon and refuse to be reconciled; or of those who are reconciled themselves, but refuse to see their enemies reconciled. It is a singular charity which has the same effects as hatred! You say: "I pardon him, but I do not wish to see him or speak to him;" and what more could you do, if you should hate him?

Third Point.—"Then the master being angry delivered him to the executioners of justice until he had paid the debt. Thus shall your heavenly Father treat every one of you, if you do not pardon your brother from the bottom of your heart." Who shall not applaud the conduct of the master, which is so full of justice? But at the same time, how can we not see our condemnation if we imitate the inhuman servant, if we preserve enmities against our brethren? We shall be as culpable as God has been indulgent towards us. "Wicked servant, I forgave you all the debt, because you besought Me; should you not have had pity on your companion, as I had pity on you?" This reproach on the lips of Jesus is a charitable means of engaging us to love our enemies by recalling His own examples; for here, as everywhere, He imposes on us nothing that He Himself has not done first. It is love for His enemies that made Him descend from the splendors of heaven to the poverty of a stable. It is love for His enemies which, in the course of His mortal life, engaged Him to pour out His benefits on a people who repaid Him by ingratitude. It is love for His enemies which made Him ascend

the altar of the cross, there to reconcile by His blood sinners with the God whom they had outraged. It is love for His enemies which dictated these admirable words : " Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do." After having given us such examples, Jesus had the right to impose on us the obligation of pardoning offences and loving enemies. Oh, may you comprehend the extent of your duties in this matter ! May the God of charity give you the strength to fulfil your duties ; then you shall see realized for you these delightful words : " Blessed are they who are merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

RENDER TO CÆSAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE
CÆSAR'S.

TWO masters dispute for the possession of your heart, God and the world. God, who created . . . it, is the legitimate possessor of it; and the world, which has not even a secondary right, however, wishes that you should give it entirely to its service. In the Gospel of to-day Jesus decides the question and fixes all your duties. He decides the rights, and He yields a part of them to the world; but what He retains He demands, and He makes it a rigorous obligation for you to reserve them for Him. The goods which God has given us are of two kinds: personal goods which are within us, and external goods which are outside of us; and we should know what God requires in both.

First Point.—The personal goods of which God demands His share are, first, your thoughts. Our thoughts are in some manner our children, the children of our soul; the most precious products of the noblest of mothers—our intelligence. It is why God demands them: He wishes that our thoughts should be directed to Him and not to creatures; that they should be occupied with Him and not

with the vanities of the world. It is why He said to the spouse, that is, to every just soul: "Place Me as a seal on your heart;" which signifies: Think of Me often, think of Me always if it is possible. But the world disputes our thoughts with God; as another Pharaoh it overwhelms us with labors and with earthly cares, to hinder us from offering to God the constant sacrifice. What shall we do? Shall we wisely share our thoughts between God and the world, and give only to the world what we should give to Him? And so, you are occupied with your family, with your studies, with the future, even with your pleasures! Very well; but on condition that there shall not pass a day, not an hour of the day, in which you shall not think of God, of your soul, of your eternity. And oh, how many reasons for that! Eternity is everything for you; your soul is the most noble part of you. God is your Creator, your last end, the most noble and worthy object of your thoughts and of your love. Has he given you an intelligence thirsting to know Him, that you should engage it only in frivolous objects? Has He given you a heart anxious to love Him, that you should employ it in affections for creatures? Impossible! To think so would contradict the lights of reason and the teachings of faith.

Another personal good are your words and discourses. What is the ordinary and perhaps the exclusive object of your words? The earth and the things of the earth; the body and all that can

adorn and flatter it; the miserable news of the world, and a thousand foolish things unworthy of a reasonable being. This is an injustice. Who has given you the gift of speech—this admirable gift by which your intelligence communicates with other intelligences, and reveals to them its thoughts and its will? God alone. Now it is only just that what comes from Him should contribute to His glory. Let your words, therefore, have sometimes God and the things of God for their object; if you love Him your mouth should speak of Him often, for the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. If you speak so often of the world, of the vanity of the things of the world, it is because you love the world and its vanity. Watch, therefore, that the love of created things does not take entire possession of your heart. If it is already smitten by it, have recourse to prayer to obtain the grace to be set free from affections unworthy of a Christian. Speak of the things of the world only as much as your position and circumstances require, but let the dearest subjects of your conversation be of God and the things which pertain to eternity.

Our works are a third personal good which we should know how to share with God. The world seeks to have us exclusively in its service. The most part of men live, labor, and annoy themselves night and day for the world. Like to the insects, they come and go incessantly, to procure for themselves clothing and nourishment, to amass riches,

and to acquire honors. The Lord condemns this disturbing activity when He exclaims: "Do not lay up treasures on earth which worms destroy and thieves take away, but lay up treasures in heaven which the worms or robbers cannot take away." Do not labor always for the world and the interests of this life, but labor for your soul, for God, and for eternity. May you be able to say every day: I have lived and labored for heaven: I have sent into eternity some good work for which I shall receive a recompense. If the Emperor Titus, although a pagan, considered as lost a day passed without having done some good, what should be the sentiments of a Christian who meditates on these words: "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

Second Point.—There are other goods, which are not within us, which are given us by God or which are the exterior fruit of our labors; we should equally share them with the Sovereign Master. One of these exterior goods and the most precious is time. We owe to God a part of the days He has given us. He Himself has made the division. He has determined what days we should give Him and what days we may give to the world. "You shall observe the seventh day," He says in the book of Exodus, "for it is holy, and I reserve it for myself." It is then a sacrilegious theft to take from God the Sundays and festival days, to sacrifice them to the world, by employing them in labor and in profane pleasures. It is to despise His law, to

deprive Him of His glory, and to prefer before Him the demon and our passions. What a shame, and what a crime! God will be avenged for this audacious sacrilege. He curses on the earth and He will curse in eternity those who thus outrage Him. Never be guilty of this profanation; give to the world what belongs to it, but learn to give to God what is His. How have you hitherto fulfilled this duty?

We should also share with God another exterior good, which is the fruit of our labors and the benediction of heaven; it is our fortune. Abel offered to God victims taken from his flock. Noe, Abraham, and the other patriarchs offered sacrifices to the Lord, and Solomon sacrificed more gold in the construction and ornamentation of the temple than in the erection of his palace. The pagans understood this law, which is so just. Reason had told them that man owed to the divinity a part of the goods he had received; and hence they offered on the altar the first fruits of the earth. And you, should you give nothing to God? But, you say, what can I give Him? Behold His temples and His altars naked, the ornaments and the vessels which are employed in the sacrifice poor and unworthy of His majesty. Would it be difficult to take some time, to retrench some vanity, to contribute to embellish the house of God or decorate His altars? You have some poor before your eyes; God has placed them there to afford you the opportunity of lending to Him in usury, since "He that

gives to the poor lends to the Lord." Give then to the brethren of Jesus a part of the goods that God has lent to you, and thereby lay up treasures for heaven.

In fine, there are souls that have lived on earth for you, who have labored for you, and you, perhaps, are enriched at the expense of their souls. You now enjoy their labors, while they, perhaps, suffer the torments of purgatory because of you. Your duty is to make some sacrifice for them, to sacrifice some of the riches which they have acquired for you; such is the manner of sharing between God and the world your personal goods—thoughts, words, actions, and external goods—your time and your fortune. Think of these things; they are of the highest importance in view of eternal salvation. Fear, by neglect of these duties, to die poor in good works and to appear empty-handed before the Judge who has said: "Give to God the things which are God's."

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

RESURRECTION OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

IN the miracle which Jesus wrought in favor of the daughter of Jairus we should especially consider three things: of whom is this young girl the image, the conditions of the sinner's return to grace, and the marks of a true return to God.

First Point.—Of whom is this young girl the image? She is yours; because she was young, full of health, loved by her father, adored by her mother. She promised herself long years, and in her gracious carelessness she smiled on the world, which extended its arms to her. However, she dies—this only daughter, this rich heiress, this youthful beauty. Neither the nobleness of her blood, nor the dignities of her family, nor wealth, nor youth, were able to preserve her from death. She is your image, because you yourself, from one moment to another, may fall under the stroke of death, as the fragile flower falls under the scythe of the harvester.

Woe to this young girl, if, captivated by the pleasures of the world, she has loved it to the detriment of her eternal interests; if the desire to

please it made her forget God; if the care of her body made her forget her soul; if she has cultivated her beauty to attract adorers; if, proud of her advantages, she has opened her heart to pride and allowed it to fall into vain projects—what a misfortune for her, and what a folly! Death has destroyed everything, and her projects and her desires have perished. What misfortune also for you, if you imitate her in her ardor for the things of the world and her carelessness for the things of heaven. Death shall come to destroy everything, both the vanity of your projects and the folly of your illusions.

On seeing her, Jesus exclaimed: "The girl is not dead, but sleepeth." It was impossible better to express the effect of sin in a soul hitherto innocent. This first fault, it is true, brings her death, but the return to life is so easy that this death is rather a sleep than a real death. The heart cannot be corrupted; conscience has not lost its first delicacy; all the principles of life, so to speak, are living—the breath of grace is all that is needed to reanimate them. See also in what this young girl is your image. You have sinned, but your heart is not perverted; every sentiment is not extinguished; the habit is not formed. All the happy impressions of virtue which you have received still live, and a little good will is all that is necessary to restore you to grace. May you understand and profit by all these elements of sanctification.

Second Point.—Jesus begins by sending away the band of musicians who make a great tumult in this

house where life must re-enter. He thus indicates to us the ordinary cause which leads to neglect in the souls of sinners, of whom this young girl is the image; also the first condition of a return to God. There carelessness has commenced with a taste for pleasures. There is in worldly diversions—in parties, balls, spectacles—a deadly vapor which penetrates the heart and excites it. Do not hope to return to the fervor of your first piety as long as you shall live in the midst of the agitation of the world. The cloud of dust which envelops the worldly soul hides from it the sight of God and the sight of duty. In retreat, on the contrary, the heart looks upon itself; it sees its state, it hears the voice of God, and nothing can hinder it from responding to His appeal. If, then, you wish to preserve grace, or to recover it, fly every occasion, all society, all reading calculated to lead you to dissipation. Do you hope to resist your passions in the midst of all that nourishes and develops them? Do you think that you can preserve your virtue for a long time, when you expose it to the seductions which corrupt it? Do you think you can remain pious, recollected, fervent, and devoted to duty in the midst of objects which dissipate the heart, excite the imagination, and bring distaste for every duty? To believe it is the saddest of illusions. Alas, how many victims this illusion has already made!

Jesus, having dismissed the clamorous crowd which surrounded the young girl, approached her,

and taking her by the hand said to her: "Young girl, arise! it is I who command you." Thus it is that God approaches the sinner in the measure that he separates from the world; He takes him by the hand. This is the grace which comes to assist our weakness. "Return to God," said Cardinal Wiseman, "and do not fear the difficulties; when you would sincerely return to good, God shall place His hand in yours and you shall overcome every obstacle." O powerful Hand, Thou unitest Thyself to a hand which is cold in death; Thou deignest to touch a corpse, and Thou givest it warmth, movement, and life! O vivifying Voice, Thou piercest the depths of the abyss; the empire of Death is shaken by Thee; she recognizes her Conqueror, and Thou compellest her to restore the prey of which she took possession. Speak to my heart, O Jesus, and if it resists speak to it more loudly and its life shall be restored. It is only Thou, O my God, who, by the application of Thy merits and the interior voice of Thy grace, can recall me to life.

Third Point.—Signs of resurrection to grace. At this word of Jesus, "Arise!" the soul re-entered the body which she had abandoned, and "immediately the young girl arose and walked. And Jesus commanded that they should give her food to eat." As the soul is the principle of human life, the Holy Spirit is the principle of the supernatural life. If the soul has truly risen, the Holy Spirit dwells there again. His presence is revealed by signs

which cannot be mistaken. Upon entering the heart He spreads there a certain recollection, a taste for the things of God, which contrast with the old habits of dissipation and the pleasures which made up her worldly life. The spirit of pride has given place to the spirit of modesty and humility; charity succeeds hatred; liberality succeeds selfishness. The habits of life are as different as the dispositions of the heart. He who only frequented worldly assemblies is pleased in the midst of sacred assemblies; virtuous friends surround him whom corrupting friends had seduced and led away; charity pours into the hands of the poor the money which vanity dispensed in foolish ornaments; words of salvation and edification fall from his lips, which were opened only in falsehood and frivolity; visits to the amiable Guest of the Tabernacle replace the useless visits which begot idleness; the Spirit of God has re-entered this soul.

Jesus commands that food shall be given the young girl whom He has just restored, and thus compels the most obstinate minds to recognize the miracle which His power had just wrought. The divine Master has prepared for us in the Holy Eucharist the food which is best suitable to sustain and develop our life as Christians. He who approaches it, and approaches it often, shall find the strength to combat, lights in his doubts, consolations in his sorrows, and supernatural life shall flow in on him with superabundance. The careless

soul who remains away from it exposes herself to see the life of grace languish and little by little become completely extinct in her. The desire of this heavenly bread and the eagerness to be nourished by it are the index of the soul whom the Holy Spirit animates by His breath and enlightens by His lights.

O divine Jesus, Thou givest life to the sinner, and Thou makest even the dead hear. Speak to my heart as Thou spoke to the daughter of Jairus. Grant that I may arise and walk, that I may receive with spiritual hunger the food Thou presentest to me, in order that I may live by Thy spirit and be nourished by Thy flesh, and that by a holy life I may come to share Thy glory.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE TRIALS OF THE CHURCH.

“THERE shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the . . . world until now, neither shall be.”

There is nothing more remarkable than the destiny of the Church of God on earth. She is a vessel launched on the ocean of time, and destined to be buffeted constantly by wind and storm. The persecution which she shall suffer at the end of time shall be, it is true, the most terrible of all, although in every century of her existence persecutors have arisen against her. The first enemy with which she had to contend was Judaism. The Jews, who had put Jesus to death, wished to stifle His religion in its very cradle; the high-priests, the doctors, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the chiefs of all the people were against her. But it may be asked: Was it necessary that so much opposition should be raised against her who was so weak, so small, and on the first day of her existence? The answer is No, emphatically No, if she had been a human institution. But she was not a human institution; she was divine, and God who had founded her sustained her. And far from falling a victim

by persecution, she acquired countless disciples. Driven from Jerusalem and Palestine, she sends her apostles to all parts of the world, and to the conquests she had already made she shall add new ones; but she shall purchase them as she did the first—at the price of the best blood of her children.

Hardly had the Church spoken to pagan nations that word which announced the glad tidings, than she counted innumerable disciples—at Athens, as well as at Rome; among the Scythians, Arabians, and Persians, as well as among the Egyptians. At the sight of these triumphs idolatry trembled for its false deities. The emperors took up arms against this new power and began the era of blood and persecution. From one corner to the other of the Roman empire the Christians were tracked by savage beasts; denounced as traitors, placed under the ban of the empire as infamous people, they were put to the rack and the flames and the lions; every citizen was ordered to denounce them, and every governor of a province was charged to put them to death. It was a prodigy unheard of, and history would not believe it if it were not compelled to record it in its annals. But the order of things was reversed. Causes have produced effects opposite to those which they should have produced. The Cæsars, instead of stifling religion, had given it a new life. Edicts of proscription propagated it more rapidly than it would have done by the peaceful preaching of millions of apostles; the blood of the martyrs had become the seed of

Christianity. Who cannot see here the finger of God?

But it was not enough for the Church to have combated against Judaism and idolatry. Intestine strife, more terrible for a society and a kingdom than external foes, arose to show clearly that God sustained His Church. The great heresy which threatened the Church with ruin commenced in the fourth century. It was propagated and came to life under different names until the sixteenth century, when it made its grand development. The apostles of heresy were sometimes powerful in words and works. Has it not produced an Arius and a Luther? Heresy opposed the Church more terribly than the Roman emperors. Arius found assistance in the legions of the Emperor Constance. Luther was supported by the German princes and the revolting peasants. But the same power which caused the Church to triumph over the Jews and pagans made her triumph over heresy, and the new triumph was another proof of her divine origin.

Rationalism in its turn declared war against the Church, and what a war! As bold as the prince of Jewish priests and Roman emperors, it attacked individuals and went so far as to shed blood. It was more impious than heresy, since it was not limited to a contest on some disputed point of doctrine. Rationalism attacked everything. Rousseau denied revelation; Hume held that the distinction between good and evil was arbitrary; Helvetius preached materialism; Diderot made

Atheists; Voltaire combined them all—at the head of the philosophic cohort he was soldier and general. At this epoch everything was employed to destroy religion—resources of genius and admirable talents, scientific studies and historical evidences, calumnies and sarcasm, but the Church triumphed over them all. The triumph she has won in the sequence of ages over all her enemies must assure us, in the midst of trials which assail her now, that she shall rise from them, as ever, purer and more glorious.

Second Point.—What we should do in time of persecution. Our first duty is to humble ourselves before God and strive to appease His anger. All the evils which bring sorrow to the Church, all the trials by which human society is afflicted come from the sins of men. Perhaps these trials are provoked by our own personal iniquities. We should then strike our breast, and by our tears appease the tempests which our crimes have unchained. This was the conduct of the saints. The prophet Daniel was not responsible for the sins which occasioned the captivity of the Jews in Babylon; however, he numbered himself among the guilty ones. “We have sinned,” he said; “we have committed iniquities. We merit only confusion for our sins, we, our kings, and our princes, and our fathers.” The holy priest Esdras thus spoke to God: “My God, I am covered with shame and I do not dare to lift my eyes to Thee, because our iniquities have ascended to heaven.” Strive

to entertain these sentiments so suitable to a Christian heart, and in the trials which beset the Church here below be careful lest you regard yourself guiltless.

In the troubles which afflict the Church we should not content ourselves with being humble; but we should pray for her. This duty our blessed Saviour points out in the Gospel of to-day, when He says: "Pray that your flight be not in the winter." This He recommends most formally in the words of Ezechiel: "I have sought for a man who would restrain my anger against my people, and I have not found him, and I have been forced to give full vent to my vengeance." These words, "I have sought for a man," should make us tremble. Alas, perhaps you are that unthinking soul who betrays the cause of the Church by neglecting its interests and by doing nothing for her glory. When God seeks some one to arrest His anger, it is a sign He wishes to pardon, and if He does not pardon it is our own fault; we have not prayed, or we have prayed without suitable dispositions. Henceforth, fulfil this duty with greatest fidelity. Pray with a pure heart, with fervor, with perseverance, that God may shorten the days of trial for good Christians. Ask that His Church may increase and flourish more and more every day, until the coming of the great day, which shall see all the enemies of our divine Saviour conquered.

Our third duty in the time of trouble and scandal is to cling most tenaciously to the teachings of the

Church. "There shall arise," says the Saviour, "false Christs and false prophets; if then some one tells you Christ is here, or there, do not believe it." To follow this warning remember these two principles: First, the faith of the Church is invariable; that which was believed in the days of the apostles is still believed, and shall be believed to the end of the world. Thus every novelty should be rejected, every new doctrine should be condemned beforehand and should not seduce us. To believe and to be saved: this is all the Christian should know and practise.

The second principle which shall preserve you from all error is that the Church is Catholic, that is to say, is universal. It follows that Christ is neither in this or that sect. Be on your guard against every particular doctrine; remain firmly attached to the Church which is Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman; whose faith is as old as herself and as extended as the world. She is the pillar of truth on which you must stand in the midst of the fluctuating and uncertain teachings of the times in which we live. She is the bark of Peter which has lived through tempest and storm, and which shall securely conduct you to the haven of safety.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

November 1st.

DIFFICULTIES AND RECOMPENSE OF SANCTITY.

WHEN we recall the virtues which the saints have practised, and the happiness which is . . . now their sweet and glorious recompense, we should reflect how their examples destroy every excuse which our sloth constantly invents to exempt us from walking in their footsteps.

First Point.—The first excuse which we allege to exempt us from being saints is taken from the difficulties of sanctity in itself. We are wont to make of the saints a class of beings apart, a separate race, invested with some perfections inaccessible to the rest of Christians—a sublime exception in Christianity. Nothing is more false than this idea of sanctity. We employ it, however, to be free from the care of being holy. It is a strategy of nature, it is an error employed as a pretext to indulge in sloth. Unquestionably in the lives of the saints we meet with marvellous phenomena; God honors them with a familiarity which seems sometimes to separate them from us; He allows His love to fall on them in a manner which astonishes us, and they oftentimes respond to these gifts of God by an immolation of themselves which

not only terrifies but astonishes us. These are, if you wish, recompenses, privileges, and marvels of their sanctity, but it is not their sanctity itself. The saints are what we Christians are, but they are better than we are. We are ordinary Christians, while the saints are eminent Christians; we are only soldiers, they are heroes. We must admit there is in sanctity a certain degree of perfection which only heroic souls attain. But we can be saints without rising so high, and the degree of virtue necessary to be a saint, in the ordinary sense of the word, has nothing which should terrify our courage.

The command which I give you, said the Lord, is not beyond you. To observe it, it is not necessary to quit the world and to bury yourself in solitude; but it is within reach of every one, and its observance demands only the simplest requirements and the most ordinary works. How many saints are happy in heaven now who have done nothing on earth which has won for them the admiration of men! St. Augustine says that God is pleased to sanctify them in the obscurity of an ordinary life. Who is the servant in the Gospel whom we see rewarded? Is it not he who has been faithful in little things? Sanctity does not consist in doing extraordinary things. No; but it consists for all in fidelity to the duties of our state and in fulfilling them for God. There is nothing in that which is so difficult.

The Christian complains of the difficulty of virtue. But how can he dare to do so with the exam-

ple of the saints before him. Ah, if we had the choice between apostasy and the scaffold!—if it were necessary for us to sell our goods, abandon our friends, and condemn ourselves to solitude, what should we say? Then it would be indeed difficult to be saints! And yet we should do it, since the saints have. But what sanctity demands of us is much less than all that. It is a question of loving a God who is amiability itself, and not offending a God who is our Friend, our Father, and our Saviour. What is there in that that is above and beyond our strength?

The worldling complains of the difficulty of virtue. How does he who serves the world dare to say this? Ah! if there is something difficult, it is to please the world, to bow to its caprices, to submit to all its requirements. But, O my God, Thou art good to all who serve Thee; amiable Master, Thou imposest precepts which are hard in appearance; but it is only a pretext, since Thou hast hidden sweetness under an apparent severity.

Second Point.—Excuses drawn from exterior difficulties. Virtue meets in the world with rude and countless obstacles, it is true; but our error is to conclude from that that sanctity is impracticable for us. And, after all, what are the obstacles? They are, first, the attractions of pleasures. But is not the world for saints as well as for us? Have they not found the world as deceitful in its caresses, as contagious in its examples, as false in its maxims, and as seductive in its pleasures? We complain

of the tyranny which is exercised over our hearts, the love of worldly joys, the violence which we must do to hinder such amiable seduction; but, let us ask, when was victory achieved without combat? Do you think it cost no violence to Magdalen, to St. Augustine, to St. Jerome, and countless others, to break the bonds which bound them to iniquity and attached them to the world? What, then, hinders you from breaking these bonds as they have done?

There is another danger which awaits us, and one that is remarkable for the countless shipwrecks it has occasioned; it is human respect. We could scarcely believe it were not our own eyes the witnesses of it. The fear of the world has become an obstacle to virtue. The Christian who wishes to serve his God must resolve to endure the raileries of libertines and the persecutions of the world; but the saints also met human respect face to face, and with what courage they were able to trample it under their feet! St. Paul was called to preach Christ crucified; but the cross is a folly in the eyes of the Gentiles, a scandal for the Jews, and he knows all this! Still it is nothing to him; Corinth, Rome, and Athens hear him preach the gospel of salvation freely. Let them despise him and calumniate him, let the world rise against him—he regards the judgments of men as nothing. Do you think that this contempt which was shown him cost St. Paul no effort?

St. Augustine had also to overcome all that is terrible in human respect. What a sensation was

created in the whole city of Milan when he broke away from all his past career! What railleries on the part of countless young libertines who were formerly his best friends! But St. Augustine triumphed over these obstacles; and it was not this only he had to conquer, but he had to break with the most ardent passions and the most inveterate habits. This was difficult. He himself depicts for us the violence of his combats, his long irresolutions, when, rolling himself on the earth, tearing his hair, he cursed his slavery without being able to free himself from its bondage. But at last, sustained by that grace which is never wanting to us, he broke his chains and by a generous effort arose above all his weaknesses. When shall you have the happiness to triumph over yourselves?

O my God, Thou who art in the highest heavens, surrounded by the immortal choirs of the elect, Thou who hast combated with so much courage, Thou beholdest my sloth and hearest my vain excuses. What must be Thy indignation! How shall I, one day, justify the monstrous contradiction which exists between my faith and my morals? What excuse shall I allege when Thou shalt point out to me saints of my own age and condition, who, in the midst of the same obstacles which arrest me, have remained faithful in the practice of all their duties? O my God, give me the strength to take them for my models. What happiness for me if, after having imitated their virtues, I may share their felicity and their glory!

ALL SOULS' DAY.

November 2d.

COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD.

TO pray and to procure prayers for the dead is at once an act of charity towards our neighbor, . . . and an act of charity towards ourselves.

First Point.—To pray for the dead is an act of charity towards our neighbor. One of the most important acts of charity is almsgiving. Now, St. Francis de Sales says that in praying for the souls in purgatory there is a true almsgiving. When you pray for these poor souls you clothe their nakedness, you furnish food for the hungry, you console the loneliness of those who are abandoned, you dry the tears of those who weep, and console the misfortune of those who are desolate; in a word, by this single act of praying for the dead you fulfil all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. O charity for the dead, most worthy of exercising our faith and our piety! How this excels all the other works of ordinary charity! It has qualities which are wanting necessarily in other works of charity. It is most easy to perform, since we can always pray. It is opportune, since the need of the souls we assist is always real. It has the merit

of being well placed, since we assist the elect. It has permanency, since eternal reward results from it, if by our prayer a soul in purgatory ceases to suffer because she has entered forever into the bosom of her God.

But there is a more decisive consideration. It is that this almsgiving is not only a duty of charity; it is often a duty of justice. Here let us recall the past. Are there not among the souls in purgatory some parents, relatives, and friends of whom we were the occasion or the accomplices of the faults which they now expiate so rigorously? Are there not in purgatory some friends who suffer because they shared in the tepidity, the vanity, the uselessness of our life? Are there not there a father, a mother, or relatives who are deprived of the happiness of seeing God only to expiate a fatal condescension in yielding to our weaknesses, sparing our sensibilities, by refusing us, through love, a counsel, a reprimand, when religion commanded them to counsel or reprove us? Here there is no question of exercising charity towards them; it is a simple act of justice which we owe them to pray for them. We are now confronted by a great act of reparation. Let us pray, therefore, for these poor souls who are unhappy because of us. We should offer, or cause to be offered, for them the holy sacrifice of the Mass. It was for the dead that at first all the fruits of the sacrifice were applied; since Jesus, after His death, descended into Limbo, whence He delivered the just of the Old Law by ap-

plying to them the merits of the blood which He had just shed. The effects of this divine blood are still the same. When the priest, says St. John Chrysostom, offers the sacrifice of the Mass, the angels hasten near the altar; they gather in golden cups the blood of the New Alliance; they then fly towards heaven, penetrate the darkened abodes of the just souls in which they are purified; they pour out on them the precious blood, and their sufferings are lighter.

Second Point.—To pray for the dead is an excellent act of charity towards ourselves. Let us cast a look on our past life. How many infidelities we see; how many days, how many years, perhaps, have passed without grace or without the fervor of charity! True, indeed, we have repented; the sacramental absolution, joined to our repentance, has covered, before God, all the iniquities of the past. But if the stain no longer exists in the soul, the debt for the soul always exists; the sin no longer exists, but the obligation of punishment remains. Now, what penance have we done? Although we should give ourselves to God henceforth during our whole life, it shall be no less true that the portion of our existence which is behind that has been taken from Him. It is a void which our tears shall never fill; it is an abyss in which we shall look in vain for works of grace. It depends on ourselves to fill that void which seems irreparable. We have deprived God of a portion of our existence, then let us give to Him in exchange an-

other existence. We have taken from Him a portion of our soul; let us give to Him in exchange another soul; let us give Him many souls, and as many as possible. Behold how by prayer for the dead we shall repair the past.

Prayer for the dead shall be useful for us in the present. When these souls shall have been delivered by our prayers, shall it be possible for them to remain indifferent to those who were here below the occasion and the instrument of their deliverance? Is not heaven the country of reward? Oh, how the delivered soul conjures God not to forget the souls who were on earth her benefactors! Oh, how in glory she intercedes and prays for us! in our temptations, what assistance! in our sorrows, what consolations! in our prayers, what help! in our agony, what support! And on the day of judgment, when we must give an account of our mission to Him who sent us to earth, what an advocate, what an intercessor we shall have prepared for ourselves by our charity! Let us therefore understand that by doing everything for the souls in purgatory we are doing everything for ourselves.

And when at length it shall come our turn to quit this earth, and when it shall be necessary for us to suffer in expiation before reaching glory, how we shall rejoice at our charity to-day! And then those souls unmindful of their brethren, who forget the dead, and who have in their heart neither a remembrance nor a prayer—God shall permit that they shall be forgotten, as they themselves forgot

the dead. But on compassionate souls the words of the Son of God shall be accomplished: "It shall be measured for you, as you yourself have measured for others." Their memory shall be treasured in the minds of the faithful as the memory of the dead remained living in their thoughts. They shall speak their name at the holy altar when they shall have pronounced the names of those who have preceded them in glory! Ah, how they shall then rejoice that they had heard the counsels of the Church and followed them! How they shall praise those practices which were so easy and which shall have been for them so fruitful!

O my God, enkindle in my heart devotion for the dead. To pray for them is to contribute to Thy glory; it is to practise charity towards our neighbor and to labor for ourselves. May I understand it, and seize every opportunity of accomplishing a duty which is as much for the interests of my salvation as for the interests of Thy glory.

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